Roy Cooper, Governor

Michael S. Regan, Secretary

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GenX found in rainwater samples collected near Chemours facility

RALEIGH– The state Division of Air Quality today announced that analysis of rainwater samples recently collected near the Chemours facility show varying levels of GenX. Details may be viewed on DEQ's GenX website, with concentrations ranging from non-detects and 5.2 parts per trillion to 630 parts per trillion on Jan. 28-29 and 9.98 parts per trillion to 286 parts per trillion on Feb. 4-5.

The state health goal of 140 parts per trillion for drinking water should not be compared to rainwater concentrations as the latter is not intended for direct consumption. However, these preliminary results confirm that the emerging contaminant is transported by wind and deposited via precipitation.

The detection of GenX in rainwater follows a Feb. 12 Notice of Violation which cited Chemours' failure to take action to terminate or control sources of contamination and mitigate onsite hazards as ordered by the state. The notice of violation directed Chemours to take immediate measures to mitigate any hazards at the Bladen County facility resulting from exposure to GenX and other pollutants, including reducing or eliminating air emissions.

"These findings lend weight to our belief that airborne GenX contributes to contamination of private wells and lakes near Chemours' facility," said Michael S. Regan, secretary of the Department of Environmental Quality. "We will continue to take any appropriate action that is necessary to protect the public health."

When rain occurs, Chemours will cover the cost of weekly analysis of rainwater from the four DEQ sampling sites near the facility.

The Division of Air Quality collected the first two rainwater samples at 10 temporary testing sites located 0.9 to 2.9 miles from the midpoint of the two production facilities at Chemours. Sites were not chosen to correlate with separate private well testing; rather, they were positioned at eight perimeter spots on public land and at one private residence with the owner's permission, with one additional site located nearly 3 miles northwest.

Using detailed forecasts developed by division meteorologists, DEQ placed the sampling containers at the sites about an hour before rain started and collected the samples within hours of the rain ending. Air Quality staff transported samples to SGS North America Inc., a private lab in Wilmington. Samples also were sent to U.S. EPA's lab in Athens, Georgia, for further analysis. DEQ is analyzing meteorological data to factor in potential impacts of wind direction and velocity, as well as precipitation rates.

The Division of Air Quality on Jan. 2 directed Chemours to begin conducting onsite rainwater sampling and analysis. The Chemours data will be made available to the public when the analysis is complete.

Also at the state's direction, Chemours will be installing a new carbon adsorption technology for a portion of the facility's emissions points. Engineering estimates suggest that this additional measure will significantly cut the overall rate of GenX emissions from indoor air at the facility.

In addition, Chemours is conducting emission testing from its process areas as required by the state. A Chemours contractor is collecting the air emission samples under watch by Division of Air Quality staff. A preliminary test was conducted on Jan. 9 to determine if the custom testing method developed was appropriate. A second sampling program was conducted on Jan. 22.

Samples are being examined for GenX and other perflourinated compounds by a Chemours contractor and the EPA's Athens lab, with results expected in coming weeks. Ongoing smokestack testing will be conducted, with an estimated five-week turnaround on results.

For additional information about the state's investigation of GenX and other emerging compounds, visit https://deq.nc.gov/news/hot-topics/genx-investigation.

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