

CLEANER AIR OREGON

Cleaner Air Oregon announces inspection blitz of potential metal emitters

DEQ to immediately inspect one-third of 316 permitted facilities identified statewide to assess potential health impact and inform industrial air quality regulatory overhaul

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) released a list of 316 facilities authorized by law to emit metals into the air and announced plans to inspect all of them to collect and verify metals data. In a letter to Governor Brown, the agency noted that the list and the inspections are important parts of Cleaner Air Oregon, an initiative begun by Governor Brown and led by DEQ and Oregon Health Authority. Cleaner Air Oregon will better align industrial air toxics regulations with human health.

DEQ inspections at one-third of the facilities will begin in June and will occur in time to inform the risk-based regulatory overhaul. The inspections—which will be prioritized based on reported data and facilities’ proximity to residences, schools, hospitals and other facilities—will include all regions of the state and all major industry types.

The list includes permitted facilities authorized to emit one or more of the following nine metals: arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, cobalt, lead, manganese, nickel and selenium. While the facilities identified are allowed by law to emit metals, DEQ does not have any data establishing that these facilities are producing emissions that pose any health risks to the public, nor do the steps to be taken imply that DEQ has made any judgment about whether any permittee is operating in violation of its permit.

Working closely with Lane Regional Air Protection Agency, DEQ relied on numerous sources to develop the list, including current air quality permits, EPA’s Urban Air Toxics Strategy, federal regulations that target metal-using industries, the Toxics Release Inventory, the Eugene Toxics Right to Know Program and the Oregon State Fire Marshal’s database.

In its letter to Governor Brown, DEQ also outlined other actions under Cleaner Air Oregon, including expanded monitoring capabilities to address a wider range of toxics as well as specific pollutants and neighborhoods. DEQ’s monitoring program also uses existing moss data collected by the United States Forest Service.

“Scientific inquiry starts with a question,” said Interim DEQ Director Pete Shepherd. “This list calls us to apply science and the best principles of public health to determine the action, if any new action is required, in the interest of healthier Oregonians, a healthier environment and a healthier economy.”

For more information on Cleaner Air Oregon visit <http://cleanerairoregon.org/>.

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