



Risk Assessment

Emissions to air from the former Bayer site at Hauxton, Cambridgeshire

Non Technical Summary

The Health Protection Agency - Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE) have reviewed the latest volatile organic compound (VOC) monitoring data collected at the Hauxton site perimeter between 6 October 2011 and 3 November 2011. This data has been considered in relation to potential toxicological effects from emissions due to the remediation work at the former Bayer site in Hauxton.

It is important to make a distinction between concerns about odour and any toxicological effect from exposure to chemicals. The role of CRCE is to produce interpretation of results in relation to potential toxicological effects. Some background information about odours has been provided as odours appear to be the main concern to members of the public, but the monitoring results are not relevant to the assessment of odours. The human nose is very sensitive to odours, and many substances that are perceived as odorous are usually present at levels below which there is a direct toxicological effect. Odours can cause nuisance amongst the population possibly leading to stress and anxiety. Some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness, as a reaction to odours even when the substances that cause those smells are themselves not harmful to health. It cannot be excluded that some symptoms expressed by residents may be as a result of their reaction to particular odours and all efforts should be taken to reduce off-site odours to as low as is reasonably practical.

The data provided to the HPA have been compared to available health based air quality guidelines and standards or assessment levels for the individual VOCs identified. Where the concentrations in air are shown to be lower than appropriate standards it may be assessed that the risk to health is minimal.

The latest results do not alter the HPA assessment that VOC emissions from the site are not of concern toxicologically and are therefore very unlikely to pose a risk to the health of nearby residents.

Background

Site

The former Bayer CropScience site near Hauxton, South Cambridgeshire, was previously used for the production of agrochemicals including pesticides and herbicides, which over time have contaminated the soil and groundwater. Due to the risk posed to the groundwater and nearby watercourses, the site was determined as Contaminated Land in 2003 by South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and designated a Special Site for regulation by the Environment Agency (EA). The site requires remediation as it cannot be left in its contaminated state as it poses a potential threat to the Riddy Brook and River Cam. The remediation work is being carried out under an Environmental Permit issued by the EA and planning consent by SCDC.

During the remediation process contaminated soils are being excavated for remediation/treatment and contaminants previously trapped in the ground may be emitted into the air. An assessment of the contaminants on site suggests that the emissions may include a range of chemicals classed as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Some VOCs have odorant properties i.e. have a smell,

whereas other VOCs do not smell. The conditions imposed by the Environmental Permit require environmental monitoring, including air quality monitoring to take place. Air quality monitoring has been carried out both onsite and at the site boundary to monitor VOC concentrations.

Monitoring

Air quality monitoring has been carried out on site since 18 February 2010, one month before the start of the remediation. The air quality sampling is carried out under the terms of the Environmental Permit by the remediation contractor, Vertase, and subsequent analysis of the sampling tubes has been undertaken by a third party accredited laboratory. The monitoring was undertaken at a number of locations at the perimeter of the site as shown on the accompanying map. VOCs present in air are trapped onto absorbent material within sample tubes over a 28 day period. The sample tubes are then analysed for the amount of VOC that has been absorbed. These amounts are then converted to concentrations of the VOCs in air. The highest concentrations of the top ten VOCs detected are provided on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website. Similar air quality monitoring has been carried out over 24 hour periods to identify the average VOC levels over a shorter term to highlight any temporary peaks in the VOC level.

Twenty two sets of monthly monitoring results have been provided; this document provides an update from the 28 day monitoring obtained during month 21, as described in Table 1. Data includes results from two off-site locations, one in Church Road, Hauxton and another on Queen's Close, Harston.

Table 1: 28 day sampling periods around Hauxton remediation works

Sample name	Date of sampling
Baseline (pre-works)	18/02/10 - 18/03/10
Month 1	18/03/10 - 15/04/10
Month 2	15/04/10 - 13/05/10
Month 3	13/05/10 – 10/06/10
Month 4	10/06/10 – 08/07/10
Month 5	08/07/10 – 05/08/10
Month 6	05/08/10 - 03/09/10
Month 7	03/09/10 – 30/09/10
Month 8	30/09/10 – 28/10/10
Month 9	28/10/10 – 25/11/10
Month 10	25/11/10 - 21/12/10
Month 11	21/12/10 - 20/01/11
Month 12	20/01/11 - 17/02/11
Month 13	17/02/11 - 17/03/11
Month 14	17/03/11 – 14/04/11
Month 15	14/04/11 – 12/05/11
Month 16	12/05/11 – 09/06/11
Month 17	09/06/11 – 13/07/11
Month 18	13/07/11 – 15/08/11
Month 19	15/08/11 – 08/09/11
Month 20	08/09/11 – 06/10/11
Month 21	06/10/11 – 03/11/11

Scope

The Centre for Radiation, Chemical and Environmental Hazards (CRCE), of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) have been asked to review the monthly and 24 hour air quality monitoring results, and assess them with respect to potential risks to human health. All interpretations contained in

this document are based on the monitoring results supplied to CRCE by the site regulators up to the 16 December 2011.

It is important to make a distinction between concerns about odour and any toxicological effect from exposure to chemicals. The role of CRCE is to produce interpretation of results in relation to potential toxicological effects. Some background information about odours has been provided as odours appear to be the main concern to members of the public, but the monitoring results provided are not relevant to the assessment of odours.

The human nose is very sensitive to odours, and many substances that are perceived as odorous are usually present at levels below which there is a direct toxicological effect.

Odours can cause nuisance amongst the population possibly leading to stress and anxiety. Some people may experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches or dizziness, as a reaction to odours even when the substances that cause those smells are themselves not harmful to health. It cannot be excluded that some resident's symptoms may be as a result of their reaction to particular odours and all efforts should be taken to reduce off-site odours to as low as is reasonably practical.

Odours often consist of a mixture of substances. Each chemical substance may be detected analytically, however this cannot be translated into what odour is perceived. Odour nuisance will depend upon the frequency and duration of odour perception; therefore the EA and LA are monitoring nuisance complaints. An odour diary is available to download from the South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) web site, or people can ring the Environment Agency's hotline on 0800 80 70 60 to report odour problems.

Methodology

Air quality standards and assessment levels

The data provided to the HPA have been compared to available health based air quality guidelines and standards or assessment levels for the individual VOCs identified. Where the concentrations in air are shown to be lower than appropriate standards it may be assessed that the risk to health is minimal. There are a variety of health based standards and assessment levels that have been calculated by a number of organisations. The hierarchy of standards and assessment levels is shown below:

- World Health Organisation air quality guidelines
- European air quality standards
- UK air quality standards
- Other UK air quality assessment levels
- National air quality assessment levels (other than UK)
- Comparison with standard of a different VOC from similar family

Units conversion

In order to be able to compare monitoring results with standards the concentrations need to be derived in the same unit of measurement. The air quality monitoring results are provided in parts per billion (ppb), and some air quality standards are expressed in micrograms per cubic metre. Therefore these need to be converted using the equation shown in box 1:

Box 1: Conversion of concentration Y in micrograms per cubic metre to X parts per billion

$$X \text{ ppb} = (Y \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3) * (24.45) / (\text{molecular weight of VOC})$$

Air quality monitoring results and discussion

Table 2 shows a summary of the highest VOC concentrations from the monitoring results from Month 21 compared to the health based standard or assessment level, and the sample location. Full copies of the air quality monitoring results are available on the South Cambridgeshire District Council website.

Table 2: Summary of results from Month 21 monitoring

Volatile organic compound	Air quality standard (ppb)	Concentration (ppb)	Monitoring Location
Acetic acid	102 UK Environmental assessment levels for the protection of human health for air [annual mean]	43	E
Naphthalene	101 UK Environmental assessment levels for the protection of human health for air [annual mean]	2.77	Church Road
(m/p)- xylene	1,016 UK Environmental assessment levels for the protection of human health for air (total xylenes) [annual mean]	1.52	Church Road
Ethyl benzene	1,016 UK Environmental assessment levels for the protection of human health for air total ethyl benzenes) [annual mean] (1.13	Church Road
Benzene, 1-methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)-	No suitable air quality standard is available for this substance	3.20	SW
		3.39	NW
1,2,3 propanetriol diacetate	No suitable air quality standard is available for this substance	5.83	NE
Isopropyl myristate	No suitable air quality standard is available for this substance	1.04	WWTW
Unknown substance	Not applicable	17	NE
		2.53	Queens Close

Table 2 shows a summary of the monitoring results from the samples collected between 06/10/11 and 03/11/11 (Month 21).

Acetic acid was found in the results for the first time during the remediation period. Traces of acetic acid were found in all locations, except for Church Road, however concentrations were only above 1ppb on the eastern boundary where a peak level of 43ppb occurred. An environmental assessment level (EAL) has been derived for acetic acid¹. The concentration of acetic acid detected at the site boundary is significantly lower than the long term EAL (102 ppb) which is protective of human health¹. Acetic acid is the major chemical constituent of kitchen vinegar.

Naphthalene was found at a maximum concentration of 2.77 ppb at the off-site monitoring location on Church Road. There is no WHO, European or UK air quality standard for naphthalene. A study cited in an EU risk assessment reported indoor naphthalene concentrations of up to 15.25 ppb (80 micrograms per cubic metre)². An EAL has been derived for naphthalene¹. The concentration of naphthalene detected at the site boundary is significantly lower than the long term EAL (101 ppb)¹. A health criteria value has been derived for naphthalene for lifetime

exposures of 0.6 ppb, however short term exposures above this level would not be expected to produce any adverse effects.

Xylene was found in the samples at a maximum of 1.52ppb. There is no WHO, European or UK air quality standard for xylene. An EAL has been derived for xylene¹. The concentration of xylene detected at the site boundary is significantly lower than the long term EAL (1016 ppb) which is protective of human health¹.

Ethyl benzene was found in the samples at a maximum of 1.52ppb. There is no WHO, European or UK air quality standard for ethyl benzene. An EAL has been derived for Ethyl benzene¹. The concentration of ethyl benzene detected at the site boundary is significantly lower than the long term EAL (1016 ppb) which is protective of human health¹.

1-methyl-4-(1-methylethyl)-benzene (MMEB) was found above 1ppb at two monitoring locations (the southwest and northwest boundary) at a maximum concentration of 3.39ppb. There is no WHO, European or UK air quality standard for MMEB. A review of the research literature did not locate any other UK or national air quality standards or assessment thresholds. In the absence of set thresholds a comparison may be made with the standard for another substance. Ethyl benzene has been chosen as the chemicals are structurally similar. An EAL has been derived for ethyl benzene. The concentration of MMEB detected at the site boundary is significantly lower than the long term EAL (1016 ppb) which is protective of human health¹.

1,2,3 propanetriol diacetate and isopropyl myristate were each found in a single monitoring location at 5.83 and 1.04ppb respectively. There is no WHO, European or UK air quality standard for these substances and a review of the research literature did not locate any other UK or national air quality standards or assessment thresholds. It was also not possible to locate chemicals with similar structures that have had air quality standards applied. However these products have uses in cosmetic products and have been shown to not be irritating or harmful to human health following exposures to concentrations in orders of magnitude higher than those present in the air at the Hauxton site.

The results show that at two monitoring locations (the northeast boundary and Queens Close) a chemical was detected on the diffusion tubes above 1ppb, however the laboratory was not able to confirm its identity. It is not possible to provide specific comments in relation to these chemical detections. However they are very unlikely to be significant to health as the levels of the unknown chemical were low (2.53ppb and 17ppb) and this is the first identification of this unknown chemical since monitoring began in February 2010 therefore any potential exposure will be short-term. Many other VOCs were detected at very low levels around the site perimeter; however all of these were below a concentration of 1 ppb.

Conclusions

Overall these results do not alter the HPAs opinion that the VOC emissions from the site are not of concern toxicologically and are therefore very unlikely to pose a risk to health, in the short or long-term, of nearby residents.

The HPA shall assess future monitoring results to continually review the risk to public health from the site's remediation.

References

1) Environment Agency (2010) H1 Environmental Risk Assessment – annex f v2.1
<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0410BSIL-e-e.pdf>

2) European Chemicals Bureau (2003), European Union Risk Assessment Report, Naphthalene.
http://esis.jrc.ec.europa.eu/doc/existing-chemicals/risk_assessment/REPORT/naphthalenereport020.pdf

Appendix – Map of monitoring locations

