



COUNTY SANITATION DISTRICTS OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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JAMES F. STAHL
Chief Engineer and General Manager

May 24, 2006

Mr. Bob Sawyer, Executive Officer
California Air Resources Board
1001 I Street, 23rd Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Submitted Electronically

Attn: Clerk of the Board

Dear Mr. Sawyer:

Comments on Proposed Amended Regulation Order- Proposed Amendments to the Airborne Toxic Control Measure for Emissions of Perchloroethylene from Dry Cleaning Operations

The Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County (Districts) appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Proposed Regulation Order for Proposed Amendments to the Airborne Toxic Control Measure for Emissions of Perchloroethylene from Dry Cleaning Operations (Proposed ATCM). The Districts support the efforts of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to more stringently regulate perchloroethylene dry cleaning operations, but urge the CARB to consider a phase-out of perchloroethylene dry cleaning. Such a phase-out would be expected to reduce discharges of this toxic compound to sewer systems, and would not be expected to result in any adverse cross-media impacts to water. If such a phase-out is not adopted, the Districts request that CARB adopt a prohibition on the discharge of separator water from perchloroethylene dry cleaners.

Among its many responsibilities, the Districts provide sewerage services to over 5 million residents, numerous commercial businesses, and over three thousand industrial facilities within Los Angeles County. The Districts operate eleven wastewater treatment plants, including ten that treat wastewater to a superior quality suitable for reuse. Over 190 million gallons per day of recycled water is produced by these plants, with over sixty million gallons per day used for applications including groundwater recharge, landscape irrigation, and industrial uses. The water that is not reused is discharged to surface waters that have beneficial uses including groundwater recharge, water recreation, warm fresh water habitat, wildlife habitat, commercial and sport fishing, and rare, threatened, or endangered species spawning, reproduction, and early development.

All of our recycled water must meet drinking water limits, which include a stringent perchloroethylene limit of 5 parts per billion (ppb). Additionally, the Districts may be required in the future to meet a more stringent perchloroethylene limit of 0.8 ppb on recycled water that is discharged to surface water bodies, as 0.8 pbb is the concentration established by the United States Environmental

Protection Agency for discharges to water bodies in California that are current or potential municipal drinking water sources.

Because of these stringent discharge limitations, the Districts are highly concerned about discharges of perchloroethylene to the sewerage system. The Districts have been aggressively pursuing reduction of perchloroethylene discharges to the sewerage system for the past thirteen years. These source reduction efforts have included a prohibition on the discharge of perchloroethylene-containing wastewater from dry cleaners, imposition of perchloroethylene discharge limitations on industrial users, support of South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) efforts to phase-out use of perchloroethylene in vapor degreasers, support of SCAQMD's efforts to phase out perchloroethylene dry cleaning, support of CARB's efforts to phase-out use of perchloroethylene in automotive cleaning products, and support of CARB's efforts to phase out use of perchloroethylene in certain consumer products. Despite these aggressive efforts, perchloroethylene concentrations in the recycled water produced by our water reclamation plants still occasionally exceed the 5 ppb drinking water criterion.

Because the Districts have been regulating discharges of perchloroethylene to the sewerage system for a number of years, there are very few routes left for significant quantities of perchloroethylene to enter the our system. Some consumer products continue to contain perchloroethylene, such as tire sealants, but these consumer products do not have obvious pathways for reaching the sewer system. The Districts remain concerned that, despite their prohibition on dry cleaner discharges of perchloroethylene-containing wastewater (such as separator water), some dry cleaners may be illegally discharging this wastewater to the sewer system. The Districts acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of dry cleaners legally dispose of their perchloroethylene-containing wastewater, but realize that it is possible that one or more dry cleaners within their service area are performing illegal disposal.

The amount of perchloroethylene needed to cause a discharge violation at the Districts' water reclamation facilities, particularly the smaller facilities, is very small. Only a fifth of an ounce of perchloroethylene is enough to potentially cause a discharge violation at one of the smaller water reclamation plants (based on the 5 ppb discharge limitation, a 6 million gallon per day treatment plant, and the perchloroethylene entering the plant over a one-hour period.) Because such a small amount of perchloroethylene can cause a discharge violation, a single perchloroethylene dry cleaner illegally discharging separator water could cause a discharge violation. Although we operate a strong program to certify and inspect dry cleaners so that no such discharges occur, it is impossible to monitor all of the dry cleaners all of the time. A phase-out of perchloroethylene dry cleaning would, however, ensure that no such discharges would occur.

If the CARB does not choose to phase out use of perchloroethylene in professional dry cleaning, we request that the Proposed ATCM be amended to require that separator water from perchloroethylene dry cleaners not be sewered. The Proposed ATCM states, "(1) Effective July 1, 2008, wastewater shall be hauled away by a registered hazardous waste transporter or treated in a wastewater treatment unit. (2) The wastewater treatment unit shall meet the following requirements: (A) A self-contained unit designed to minimize solvent discharge to the environment, including but not limited to the air, water, and sewer system." The Districts believe this language could be misinterpreted as authorizing the discharge to the sewer of perchloroethylene-contaminated wastewater if the wastewater is first treated in a "wastewater treatment unit" as specified in the Proposed ATCM. The Districts request that CARB add language to this provision that specifically states: "Wastewater from a wastewater treatment unit shall not be discharged to the sewer system." Wastewater from perchloroethylene dry cleaners is typically contaminated with perchloroethylene, and it has not been common practice to sewer such wastewater for over a decade. This practice was put in place to prevent groundwater contamination.

If CARB does not feel that the addition of specific language prohibiting the discharge of wastewater to the sewer system is warranted, then CARB should state, at a minimum, that no wastewater be sewerred unless a dry cleaner obtains specific, written approval from the appropriate sewerage agency.

In addition, the Districts are concerned about the absence in the Proposed ATCM of a provision relating to wastewater evaporators that is present in the current ATCM. The current dry cleaning ATCM (as well as the current SCAQMD Rule 1421) includes the following language: "Wastewater evaporators shall be operated to ensure that no liquid Perc or visible emulsion is allowed to vaporize." (See Proposed ATCM, Appendix C, pg. C-8). It is recommended that that language be retained in the current ATCM.

Finally, the Districts have evaluated the potential cross-media pollution impacts of the Proposed ATCM. While some perchloroethylene dry cleaning facilities may opt to convert to water-based cleaning under the Proposed ATCM, the wastewater discharge from water-based cleaning should for the most part be similar to that of home washing machines, and thus readily handled by our wastewater treatment plants. In some cases wet cleaners may use toxic chemicals to improve spot removal but the wastewater impacts from this source are expected to be less than the impacts from perchloroethylene dry cleaners.

The Districts urge CARB to take all actions necessary to minimize the discharge of perchloroethylene to the sewer system. While the Districts strongly believe that movement away from perchloroethylene altogether would be the most beneficial action for protection of the environment and human health, we request that CARB at a minimum include the additional language proposed above to strengthen the Proposed ATCM as it relates to the discharge of perchloroethylene-containing wastewater to the sewer system.

The Districts appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact the undersigned or Heather Lamberson at (562) 699-7411, extension 2950.

Very truly yours,

James F. Stahl



Paul Martyn

Head, Industrial Waste Section

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