

State of Oregon
Department of Environmental Quality

Memorandum

Date: Nov. 29, 2011

To: Environmental Quality Commission

From: Joni Hammond, Deputy Director

Subject: Agenda Item J, Informational item: Draft Toxics Reduction Strategy recommendations and opportunities for Oregon leadership on safer chemicals Dec. 15-16, 2011, EQC meeting

Purpose of item This item will give a summary of DEQ's draft Toxics Reduction Strategy recommendations and provide an opportunity for the commission to provide input and direction on these recommendations. A guest presenter from Portland State University will give a presentation on how Oregon can take a leadership role in using safer chemicals.

Why this is important One of the DEQ's strategic directions is to protect Oregonians from toxic pollutants. Given that toxic chemicals can move readily between air, water and land environments and considering the large number of these chemicals in commerce, DEQ needs a strategic and integrated approach to reducing toxic chemicals and pollutants in the environment. Such an approach can help DEQ achieve individual toxics reduction program goals in a more effective and efficient way. Reducing toxics also provides economic opportunities for Oregon by allowing the state to take a leadership role in accelerating the transition to safer chemicals for use in businesses and consumer products.

Background In fall 2009, DEQ presented the commission with an outline of the objectives and plans for developing an agency Toxics Reduction Strategy. In addition to the benefits for all DEQ programs in taking a more strategic approach to reducing toxics, DEQ and the commission also recognized that the Toxics Reduction Strategy could help achieve the goals of the recently revised Human Health Water Quality Toxics Criteria rules. In its October 2008 directive to DEQ at the outset of that rulemaking, the commission highlighted the need to implement alternative strategies beyond the use of water quality discharge permits to meet the new criteria.

The first task in developing the Toxics Reduction Strategy was to establish an initial focus list of priority toxic chemicals to be the primary, but not sole, focus of the agency's Toxics Reduction Strategy actions. This list of 51 chemicals or groups of chemicals, found in Table 1 of attachment A, will help DEQ prioritize reduction and assessment activities.

DEQ consulted with an external stakeholder group to establish the process and framework for developing the strategy. The group collected information on the focus list chemicals, reviewed current DEQ toxics programs and used a range of qualitative considerations to evaluate potential toxics reduction activities. An internal DEQ cross-program team met regularly to guide the strategy development and conduct the evaluation of toxics reduction and assessment actions. Most recently, the agency's Executive Management Team reviewed and prioritized the draft recommendations, summarized in Table 2 of attachment A.

Key issues

Most of the draft recommended actions summarized in Table 2 involve the participation of multiple agencies and organizations to ensure effective implementation. DEQ recognizes that one agency cannot address the myriad of challenges posed by toxic chemicals in the environment, and that greater environmental and human health gains are possible when multiple entities are pursuing common goals. Another objective of the strategy is to identify source reduction actions that can address multiple chemicals and families of chemicals. As a result, many of the draft recommended actions apply to all focus list chemicals or a large percentage of them.

Common themes emerged in the development of the draft recommended strategy actions. These themes provide a useful organizational format to present and discuss the actions in Table 2, and include the following:

- Improving integration and prioritization of toxics reduction activities
- Enhancing effective existing toxics reduction efforts
- Addressing identified toxics reduction needs
- Assessing and characterizing toxics in Oregon

Reducing toxics in Oregon's environment benefits the health of Oregonians and ecological life, and can provide economic opportunities for Oregon businesses and research institutions. By taking a leadership role in the transition to safer chemicals, Oregon can position itself to take advantage of the growing market demand for products and services that rely on less toxic chemicals and processes.

EQC involvement

After conducting public involvement activities related to the draft strategy in the early part of 2012, DEQ will return to the commission later in the year with a final Toxics Reduction Strategy.

Attachments

- A. Draft recommendations summary
- B. Draft action descriptions

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