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Contact:

Dr. Clifford Lau, Eyes on Shell
clifford.lau1@gmail.com, 412-716-1836

Debra Smit, Breathe Project
dsmit@breatheproject.org, 412-760-7677

Shell Polymers Plastic Plant Posted Fenceline Data Showing High Benzene Levels That Exceed the ATSDR Minimal Risk Level for Acute Inhalation Exposure, 14 Days or Less

Monaca, Pa. – Eyes on Shell is calling on Shell Polymers to account for the high levels of benzene emitted from the plant during the two-week period ending April 13, 2023, as posted on its the fenceline data report.

According to Shell's reports, multiple fenceline monitors exceeded benzene concentrations of 9 µg/m³ with the highest two-week average at 110 µg/m³ according to data from the Passive Air Monitor (PAM) #15. Shell is required to operate these monitors under a settlement agreement with environmental groups and investigate concentrations above 9 µg/m³.

The PAMs readings are a two-week average. One of the monitors, PAM #15, is the monitor closest to the waste water treatment plant at Shell Polymers which Shell reported on Facebook was part of the problem that week. (See attached map)

Summa canister data, which was also collected and reported by Shell under the settlement agreement with environmental groups, also showed extremely high levels of benzene at two monitoring locations at the Shell plant on

April 11, 2023: 185.02 µg/m³ (CAMS 01) and 89.32 µg/m³ (CAMS 04).

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has set the Minimal Risk Level (MRL) for exposure to benzene concentrations of 29 µg/m³ for more than 24 hours. Exposure concentrations above this threshold for as little as 24 hours can increase the risk of noncancerous health effects like a weakened immune system.

The Shell plant's 110 µg/m³ 2-week average concentration far exceeds the 29 µg/m³ minimal risk level for acute inhalation exposure.

For a comparison of benzene emissions at refineries in the U.S., see [Environmental Integrity Project's report](#).

Around 9 p.m. on April 11, residents near the plant reported to Eyes On Shell strong smells described as a chemical fire, burning plastic and a strong chemical smell. Benzene has a sweet, aromatic, gasoline-like odor. People also complained about headaches, sore throat and coughing. Most individuals can begin to smell benzene in air at 4.96 µg/m³. The odor threshold generally provides adequate warning for acutely hazardous exposure concentrations but is inadequate for more chronic exposures.

Environmental groups plan to attempt to hold Shell Polymers accountable on Shell's Community Call planned for **TONIGHT, Tuesday, April 25, 2023** at 6:00 p.m. More information on the scheduled call can be found [here](#).

"This is not the first time that Shell has exceeded the benzene trigger of 9 µg/m³. They keep repeating the same mistake," said Dr. Clifford Lau of Beaver County Marcellus Awareness Community's Eyes on Shell watchdog team. "Shell needs to get this problem resolved."

"This is not a plant Pennsylvania taxpayers should be subsidizing for \$1.65 billion," said Matt Mehalik, Breathe Project executive director. "Why should taxpayers be subsidizing a plant that continues to be out-of-control and that releases harmful chemicals to the community? EPA Region 3 should consider stepping in to put an end to ongoing, highly problematic malfunctions at this facility."

Eyes on Shell and environmental groups have also called on the Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) to fully enforce the law to abate these serious emissions.

Since January 2022, Shell has submitted more than 39 "[Malfunction Reports](#)" to the DEP listing a multitude of problems at the plant. Since April 2022, the state DEP has issued 14 "[Notices of Violation](#)," 11 of which were related to air quality. These citations have not, unfortunately, ended ongoing problems with the plant, and evidence of evasive behaviors towards the PA DEP's requests for root cause explanations are starting to emerge.

The [Environmental Integrity Project](#) and Clean Air Council sent a notice of intent to sue letter to Shell for repeatedly violating air pollution limits and releasing plumes of black smoke from flares in violation of the law. The notice is a legally required first step to sue a company under the Clean Air Act.

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