



Press Release

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TERA to organize meeting in Fairbanks regarding the toxicity value for sulfolane

(FAIRBANKS, AK) - An independent, expert panel convened by Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment (TERA) will be meeting in Fairbanks to discuss the panel's review of the available reference doses for sulfolane, a contaminant found in the groundwater of North Pole. A reference dose is a toxicity value, a key component used by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) in establishing a cleanup level for the groundwater. The technical panel will be meeting September 16 and 17 at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (Wood Center-Room EF).

The panel selected by TERA is comprised of national experts in toxicology, immunology, risk assessment, and contaminated sites. The group will discuss relevant scientific issues and questions related to the reference doses during a two day event. This process and the results will help assure DEC utilizes the most scientifically defensible reference dose when calculating a groundwater cleanup level for sulfolane.

A report summarizing the panel's recommendations will be submitted to DEC and considered as part of the decision on a cleanup level for sulfolane. DEC's decision on a cleanup level is expected by the end of 2014.

The public is invited to observe the panel during their deliberations. Anyone interested in observing the discussion will need to register in advance, as space will be limited. No audio or video recording or photographs will be permitted. Because the panel review is a scientific meeting, there will be no public comment period during the meeting, however DEC personnel will be available to answer general questions on the sulfolane project after the panel concludes their deliberations each day.

Sulfolane is an industrial solvent found in groundwater wells near the North Pole refinery in the fall of 2009. The discovery and investigation of sulfolane contamination has been unprecedented in Alaska due to the distance that sulfolane has traveled in groundwater and the number of private drinking water wells affected.

TERA is an independent non-profit organized for scientific and educational purposes. TERA describes its mission as supporting the protection of public health by developing, reviewing and communicating risk assessment values and analyses; improving risk methods through research; and educating risk assessors, managers, and the public on risk assessment issues.

The public may submit technical comments on the reference doses by September 8 at the following site: <http://www.tera.org/Peer/sulfolane/index.html>. The written comments will be provided to the panel for their consideration.

To register to observe the TERA meeting visit the registration website before September 8 at: <http://www.tera.org/Peer/sulfolane/registration.html>. If you plan to attend the meeting and park on campus, please note that UAF parking rules apply.

For more information on Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment, visit their website at: <http://www.tera.org/>

For more information on the North Pole sulfolane investigation and cleanup, visit the project website at: <http://dec.alaska.gov/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery/>

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