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Reference News Release: Cabot Corporation Agrees to Spend Over \$84 Million to Control Harmful Air Pollution at Texas, Louisiana Facilities

Reference News Release

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WASHINGTON - Boston-based Cabot Corporation, the second largest carbon black manufacturer in the United States, has agreed to pay a \$975,000 civil penalty and spend an estimated \$84 million on state of the art technology to control harmful air pollution, resolving alleged violations of the New Source Review (NSR) provisions of the Clean Air Act (CAA) at its three facilities in the towns of Franklin and Ville Platte, La. and Pampa, Texas, announced the Department of Justice and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) today. This agreement is the first to result from a national enforcement initiative aimed at bringing carbon black manufacturers into compliance with the CAA's NSR provisions. The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality is a co-plaintiff in the case and will receive \$292,500 of the penalty.

“With today’s commitment to invest in pollution controls, Cabot has raised the industry standard for environmental protection,” said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. “These upgrades will have lasting, tangible impacts on improved respiratory health for local communities. We expect others in the industry to take notice and realize their obligation to protect the communities in which they operate.”

“By agreeing to pay an appropriate penalty and install state of the art technology to control harmful air pollution, Cabot Corp is taking a positive step forward to address these alleged violations of the Clean Air Act,” said Robert G. Dreher, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division. “This agreement will serve as a model for how the industry can come into compliance with the Clean Air Act by installing controls that prevent harmful pollution and improve air quality for surrounding communities.”

“This is a huge win for the citizens of our district,” said U.S. Attorney Stephanie A. Finley. “These harmful pollutants can cause serious, long-term respiratory harm. The United States Attorney’s Office is committed to the enforcement of the environmental laws and protection of the community. This settlement promotes a

healthier environment and an opportunity to allow the residents of the district to breathe cleaner air.”

At all three facilities, the settlement requires that Cabot optimize existing controls for particulate matter or soot, operate an “early warning” detection system that will alert facility operators to any particulate matter releases, and comply with a plan to control “fugitive emissions” which result from leaks or unintended releases of gases. To address nitrogen oxide (NO_x) pollution, Cabot must install selective catalytic reduction technology to significantly reduce emissions, install continuous monitoring, and comply with stringent limits. At the two larger facilities in Louisiana, Cabot must address sulfur dioxide (SO₂) pollution by installing wet gas scrubbers to control emissions, install continuous monitoring, and comply with stringent emissions limits. In addition, the Texas facility is required to comply with a limit on the amount of sulfur in feedstock which is the lowest for any carbon black plant in the United States.

These measures are expected to reduce NO_x emissions by approximately 1,975 tons per year, SO₂ emissions by approximately 12,380 tons per year, and significantly improve existing particulate matter controls. Exposure to NO_x emissions can cause severe respiratory problems and contribute to childhood asthma. SO₂ and NO_x can be converted to fine particulate matter once released in the air. Fine particulates can be breathed in and lodged deep in the lungs, leading to a variety of health problems and even premature death. The harmful health and environmental impacts from these pollutants can occur near the facilities as well as in communities far downwind from the plants.

In the complaint filed by DOJ on behalf of EPA, the government alleged that between 2003 and 2009, Cabot made major modifications at its carbon black facilities without obtaining pre-construction permits and without installing and operating required pollution technology. The complaint further alleges that these actions resulted in increased emissions of NO_x and SO₂, violating CAA requirements stating that companies must obtain the necessary permits prior to making modifications at a facility and must install and operate required pollution control equipment if those modifications will result in increases of certain pollutants.

Today’s action also requires that Cabot spend \$450,000 on energy saving and pollution reduction projects that will benefit the communities surrounding the facilities in Franklin and Ville Platte, La. and in Pampa, Texas, such as upgrading air handling units at municipal buildings in the three communities to more efficient technology.

Carbon black is a fine carbonaceous powder used as a structural support medium in tires and as a pigment in a variety of products such as plastic, rubber, inkjet toner and cosmetics. It’s produced by burning oil in a low oxygen environment; the oil is transformed into soot (carbon black), which is collected in a baghouse. Because the oil used in the process is low value high sulfur oil, the manufacturing process creates significant amounts of SO₂ and NO_x, as well as particulate matter.

This settlement is part of EPA’s national enforcement initiative to control harmful air pollution from the largest sources of emissions. Since 2010, EPA has been focusing enforcement efforts on reducing emissions at carbon manufacturing plants in the United States. Currently, none of the 15 carbon black manufacturing plants located in the United States have controls on emissions of SO₂ and NO_x or have continuous emissions monitors.

Cabot Corporation manufactures global specialty chemicals and performance materials, which include rubber additives for tires and brake pads, activated carbon for air purifiers, chemicals used in the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries, and inkjet colorants.

The proposed consent decree will be lodged with the United States District Court for the Western District Court for Louisiana and will be subject to a 45-day public comment period. The company is required to pay the penalty within 30 days after the court approves the settlement. The proposed consent decree can be viewed online at www.justice.gov/enrd/Consent_Decrees.html

More information about the settlement: www2.epa.gov/enforcement/cabot-corporation-clean-air-act-settlement

More information about EPA's national enforcement initiative: <https://www.epa.gov/enforcement/national-enforcement-initiative-cutting-hazardous-air-pollutants>

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