



VIANT MEDICAL INC. – ETHYLENE OXIDE AIR EMISSIONS

Issue Summary

Background

Viant Medical Inc. (Viant), located at 520 Watson Street, SW, Grand Rapids, has been using ethylene oxide to sterilize medical equipment at this location for 30 years.

Viant has a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) Air Quality Division that was issued in 2005. Viant is also subject to the federal rule called a National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants, 40 CFR Part 63 Subpart O for commercial sterilizers that use ethylene oxide.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ethylene oxide is a chemical that is known to cause cancer. Studies of people that work with ethylene oxide show an increased risk of breast cancer and blood cancers (including multiple myeloma, leukemia, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma).



Viant Medical Facility

Response activities

During the MDEQ's investigation of Viant, levels of ethylene oxide emissions associated with the facility were found to be higher than expected. The information collected prompted a larger and more in-depth investigation including air modeling and outdoor air sampling in multiple phases. In addition, the MDEQ issued several Violation Notices to Viant and began enforcement action.

The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) and the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) were brought in to help with certain activities.

Current agency activities include:

- MDEQ air modeling to estimate the amount of ethylene oxide in the air near Viant and the surrounding areas.
- MDEQ continuing to conduct outdoor air testing – multiple phases.
- KCHD continuing the evaluation of available data on cancer incidence in the area.
- MDHHS conducting an initial public health evaluation based on available outdoor air data.
- MDEQ issuing several Violation Notices to Viant.
- MDEQ beginning further enforcement action.

When will information be available?

The KCHD, MDHHS and the MDEQ are working together to ensure the community is getting the answers it needs to make decisions about their health and the environment they live in. More information is available at www.michigan.gov/viant. The following will be made available to the public by March 31, 2019:

- KCHD cancer incidence evaluation results.
- MDHHS initial public health evaluation.
- MDEQ air sampling results.

What are the potential health risks of ethylene oxide?

Breathing very high amounts of ethylene oxide over a short period of time may cause headaches, dizziness, upset stomach, fatigue, and respiratory irritation. **The amounts of ethylene oxide measured and estimated to-date around Viant do not pose a risk of short-term health problems.**

Breathing ethylene oxide, even at low levels, over a lifetime may increase the risk of developing breast cancer and blood cancers (including multiple myeloma, leukemia, and non-Hodgkins lymphoma) in some people.

Who can I talk to?

Several agencies are hard at work to get and share information that the community needs. The best place to find current information is at www.michigan.gov/viant. Anyone with questions can call:

- For questions on the Cancer Incidence Evaluation:
 - Alicynne Glazier, KCHD – 616-632-7071
- For health-based questions:
 - MDHHS – 800-MI-TOXIC or 800-648-6942
- For work safety questions:
 - MIOSHA – 800-866-4674
- For compliance questions:
 - Chris Ethridge – 517-582-3063
 - The Environmental Assistance Center – 800-662-9278

Michigan's Environmental Justice Policy promotes the fair, non-discriminatory treatment and meaningful involvement of Michigan's residents regarding the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies by this state. Fair, non-discriminatory treatment intends that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or low-income populations, will bear a disproportionately greater burden resulting from environmental laws, regulations, policies, and decision-making. Meaningful involvement of residents ensures an appropriate opportunity to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment and/or health.