



Press Release

THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH (IDPH) RELEASES THE FINDINGS OF THEIR CANCER INCIDENCE STUDY

Study Finds Some Cancers were Elevated, but also Advises of Inconsistencies in the Findings and Limitations of the Study. Recommends Additional Studies be Performed.

Willowbrook, IL, March 29, 2019 — Today, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) released the results of a Cancer Incidence Study completed over the last seven (7) months. The purpose of the study was to determine whether there are elevated incidents of cancer of the types believe to be associated with ethylene oxide (EtO) exposure in the area surrounding Sterigenics. The study relied on data from the Illinois State Cancer Registry (ISCR), a gold standard certified registry, covering a twenty-one (21) year time period – 1995 to 2015. The IDPH advised that this was the first study of its kind pertaining to residential versus occupational, and reminded that the results only show correlations and not causations. The study results have been posted to the IDPH website (www.dph.illinois.gov) along with a press release and associated Frequently Asked Questions. The IDPH is also planning to host an educational webinar in the near future to further explain the study’s background, design, and findings. In addition, the IDPH will provide an e-mail address for specific questions.

On August 22, 2018, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) issued a Health Consultation Letter evaluating the implications regarding a change in the cancer risk basis for EtO in the EPA Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS). Specifically, how that change may affect general population risks estimated from EtO-emitting facilities in the 2014 National Air Toxics Assessment (NATA) update. In December 2016, IRIS increased EtO’s adult-based inhalation unit risk factor 30-fold in cancer potency. It also changed EtO’s cancer weight-of-evidence descriptor from “probably carcinogenic to humans” to “carcinogenic to humans.” These changes increased the modeled estimated cancer risks from EtO exposure in many census tracts across the United States, including seven (7) in the Willowbrook area. One of the follow-up recommendations within the ATSDR report was that the IDPH investigate whether there are elevated cancers in the population surrounding the Sterigenics facility that are consistent with those associated with chronic EtO exposures.

The Village met with high-ranking officials at the IDPH on September 11, 2018 to kick-off this study and at that time urged that the study be expedited to enable the findings to be shared with the community as soon as possible. Upon being briefed on the results of the IDPH study, Mayor Trilla stated, “This is another important piece of this puzzle. We remain focused on the safety of the community, and we look forward to the IDPH’s completion of larger studies to further verify the findings.”

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