

Prevention of Significant Air Quality Deterioration Review

Final Determination

October 13, 2011

Facility Name: Huber Engineered Woods, LLC

City: Commerce

County: Jackson

AIRS Number: 04-13-157-00014

Application Numbers: TV-19076 and TV-19319

Dates Applications Received: July 13, 2009 and November 24, 2009



State of Georgia
Department of Natural Resources
Environmental Protection Division
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BACKGROUND

On July 13, 2009, Huber Engineered Woods, LLC (hereafter Huber) submitted an application for an air quality permit to relax NO_x, VOC, CO and PM PSD-avoidance emission limits and allow increased production and increased use of resins containing melamine urea phenol formaldehyde (MUPF). The facility is located at 1442 Highway 334 in Commerce, Jackson County. In exchange of PSD-avoidance limits, PSD/BACT limits are placed on pollutants emitted in significant amounts. Additionally, the monitoring strategy for the board press wood products enclosure has been updated. This modification will result in emissions increases of NO_x, VOC, SO₂, CO, and PM. The sources of these increases in emissions include the Wellons wood fired burner and thermal oil heater (WBNR); the rotary dryers (DRY1, DRY2, and DRY3); and the board press group (BDFN).

On August 18, 2011, the Division issued a Preliminary Determination stating that the modifications described in Application Nos. TV-19076 and TV-19319 should be approved. The Preliminary Determination contained a draft Air Quality Permit allowing increased production and increased use of MUPF resin.

The Division requested that Huber place a public notice on August 24, 2011 in the *Jackson Herald* (legal organ for Jackson County). This is a newspaper of general circulation in the area of the existing facility. This notified the public of the proposed permit modification and provided the opportunity for written public comment. The public comment period expired on September 30, 2011.

During the comment period, comments were received from the general public. There were no comments received from the U.S. EPA Region IV or the facility. The PSD permit will remain unchanged, as a result of the comments received during the public comment period.

A copy of the final permit is included in Appendix A. A copy of written comments received during the public comment period is provided in Appendix B.

COMMERCE CITIZEN COMMENTS

Comments were received from Dianne Nunn, Commerce citizen, in a letter dated September 26, 2011.

Comments

I spoke with Representative Tommy Benton who had contacted your office about your notification of Huber Engineer Wood's request to "remove all PSD-avoidance limits and to remove restrictions on the use of melamine urea phenol formaldehyde resin and to increase production capacity". First, let me ask, "What is PSD-avoidance?" If you are going to remove all limits, it sounds like it must be important for the common man to understand what is being unleashed in unlimited amounts.

It seems only a short while ago that I responded to the public hearing notice for Huber's request to increase limits for these same reasons. My concern is the need to increase the amount of carcinogens being released into the air yet again. I and my neighbors grew up with the value of appreciating the land and the environment that we see as a God-given resource. Our parents and grandparents instilled in us the importance of passing this resource to our children and grandchildren in the same pristine way we were afforded. My grandfather would have never dreamed it was not only the soil and water we would be so concerned about guarding – with our generation it is the air that we breathe that is now in jeopardy.

First let me say that I am excited about the free enterprise system that is so important to our county and our nation. It is a beautiful process, and I am excited to see a bright business mind identify a need and find a way to fulfill that need and make a good return on the profit of their business. Everyone benefits as long as all the moral and ethical boundaries are honored. It is when the "little guy's" "rights are compromised for the sake of profit that it is no longer a beautiful thing to watch. There are a lot of us "little guys" out here breathing the air that we no longer have a say-so in, and that is where I have the problem. My family lives within 3 miles of Huber. It is neither financially feasible nor morally right that the people who were here long before Huber came to move in order to have clean air. Therefore, I have several concerns:

- Mr. Benton stated that based on his conversation with you, Huber came in agreeing to a permit that was under what the prescribed standards were. Maybe their motives were totally pure in doing so, but at this point I ask myself "honestly, was this the long-range plan all along? "erosion over time will be less noticed and more palatable". These limits have been increased several times since their doors were opened.
- When is enough "enough"? If all of this is to increase production, we can expect yet again for the bar to be lowered to continue increasing Huber's production and profit margin. Again this will be at the cost of the air we breathe.
- How often will the air quality to be monitored and by whom?
- I cannot speak for my neighbors, but both my husband and I have experienced an increase of respiratory problems requiring medical attention over the past several years – more allergy type problems and more respiratory infections. Maybe this is not as a result of increased emissions, but yet maybe it is.
- Your newspaper release stated, ". . . air quality levels SHOULD (my emphasis) pose no SIGNIFICANT (again my emphasis) health risk around the plant. "Should" is not something that can be taken to the bank. Who determines "significant". If the quality of life is less to those of us who were here long before Huber impacted our air that in itself is "significant" to me.

- I would be interested in knowing where the owners of Huber reside. Does their family breathe the air impacted by their profit margins? Would employees of your division buy a home or property located in this area?
- Since the Louisiana Pacific Plant closed, does this give other businesses the right to increase their emissions?
- How is the air quality monitored in our region and how would these increased emissions affect the cumulative effect?
- Jobs are extremely important, but expansion should not be at the expense of damage to our community and environment.
- What is the bottom line reason for changing these limits? With the economy down and construction off, why is there a need to raise limits or increase production. It would seem there would be less of a demand, therefore, lower production and no need to raise the limits.
- Our Country is in a dilemma – more recently a financial one because of the breach of moral and ethical decisions of those entrusted with the Government and the free market system. Your press release to the Jackson Herald stated “Barring the introduction of startling new evidence, the EPD appears ready to grant the permit”. It sounds as if my concerns or presence at the “Public Hearing” are already considered irrelevant, but I would hope not. I respectfully ask that the limits not be further compromised and that Huber go back to the board room and find another way to increase their profits that will not be at the expense of polluting the air that we breathe.

EPD Response.

1. What is PSD-avoidance?

Prevention of significant deterioration (PSD) is a federal regulation codified in 40 CFR 52.21 and Georgia Rule 391-3-1-.02(7), which specifies permitting requirements for major sources of specified air pollutants or modifications that are major, as defined in the regulation. This regulation was issued to comply with the federal Clean Air Act (CAA). A PSD avoidance permit can be issued to a company that could emit at a major source level of one or more criteria pollutants, but which elects to accept limits to assure that emissions are not emitted at a major source level. A PSD avoidance permit includes practically enforceable requirements, for the purpose of assuring that emissions are below 250 tons per year (tpy) for each criteria pollutant. Since this facility is located in an attainment area, the PSD major source threshold for each criteria pollutant is 250 tpy. The Criteria pollutants addressed in this amendment are carbon monoxide (CO), volatile organic compounds (VOC), sulfur dioxide (SO₂), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), and particulate matter (PM).

Since the PSD avoidance limits will no longer be retained, a full PSD review was performed, as if the facility had not been built, per 40 CFR 52.21(r)(4). This amendment reclassifies the Huber facility as a major source for PSD under the federal regulations. The PSD review process ensures that the facility will remain in compliance with state and federal regulations. The Division ensures compliance with these regulations through modeling analyses that demonstrate that the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) are not exceeded. The NAAQS standards, set by the EPA, are based on health and welfare impacts on people, including vulnerable and at risk population groups. As required by PSD, the Division has included practically enforceable requirements in this amendment for the purpose of minimizing emissions from this facility. These requirements include control system monitoring requirements to ensure proper control and the destruction of VOC emissions and toxic chemicals. Huber is also being required by the permit to perform emission tests, which must demonstrate compliance with the emission limits spelled out in the permit.

2. The commenter is concerned about the increase in carcinogens released into the air. Huber is not allowed, by this amendment, to increase their emission of formaldehyde above the previously established limits. The Division evaluated the potential health impact of the most toxic air pollutants (which includes formaldehyde) from this facility in accordance with the EPD Air Toxic Guideline. Using maximum allowable emission rate for each pollutant, computer dispersion modeling determined the maximum ground-level concentration (MGLC) that would result from the emissions. These concentrations were then compared to the acceptable ambient concentrations (AAC). This analysis predicted that emissions of formaldehyde from the facility would not create an adverse health impact on the surrounding community. This prediction holds true for all locations outside the fence line.

Huber is subject to the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP) for Plywood and Composite Wood Products, which is found in 40CFR Part 63 Subpart DDDD. Such Part 63 NESHAPs are referred to as MACTs, because the emission limits are required to be set by procedures which determined the maximum achievable control technology (MACT), as defined by the Clean Air Act. This rule requires that Huber's emission control equipment must reduce formaldehyde emissions from the dryer system and the press by at least 90%.

The Division understands that people want to avoid exposure to toxic pollutants as much as possible and that the small concentrations of toxic pollutants emitted from this plant will add to the exposure that is already occurring. However, because the evaluation was carried out in a conservative manner, the Division does not believe that the emissions allowed by this amendment pose a health risk.

3. Will emissions be increased in future amendments and can we expect yet again for the bar to be lowered?
Nothing can prevent Huber from applying for a modification that would allow an increase in emissions. However, before such a future modification and/or increase in emissions is allowed, Huber must demonstrate compliance with the CAA before approval is granted.
4. How often will the air quality be monitored and by whom?
According to the 2009 Georgia Ambient Air Surveillance Report, the monitored sites closest to Jackson County are in Hall County and Clark County. These sites are operated by the EPD and sample on a continuous basis. The Division will continue to perform unannounced annual air quality inspections.
5. Who determines significant health risk?
There are several agencies, both public and private, which assess the risk of particular chemicals. The International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC) classified formaldehyde as a known carcinogen. However, the EPA has not made a change in the classification of formaldehyde and still classifies it as a probable human carcinogen. The EPA presents their findings in the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS). IRIS publishes safe levels of exposure to formaldehyde for human health. Since IRIS identifies formaldehyde as a suspected human carcinogen, the safe level of exposure for human health is very low. EPA has determined that a safe annual exposure level, Acceptable Ambient Concentration (AAC), is 0.8 micrograms per cubic meter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). In addition, OSHA has published a 15-minute short term exposure limit, which is 246 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. All air toxic concentrations assessed in EPD's review (including formaldehyde) were found to be less than their respective AACs. Therefore, the proposed project complies with the State Air Toxics Guidelines.

6. With the Louisiana Pacific Plant closed, does this give other businesses the right to increase their emissions?

Because the Louisiana Pacific (LP) permit is still in effect, the review of the Huber application was done as if LP was in full operation.

7. How is the air quality monitored in our region and how would these increased emissions affect the cumulative effect?

As stated above, the air quality is monitored at stations maintained by the Division.

8. What is the bottom line reason for changing these limits? With the economy down and construction off, why is there a need to raise limits or increase production?

Huber sees this amendment as necessary because it will reduce resin costs, partially because it allows increased flexibility in resin selection; it will reduce production down time; it will allow an increase in production. Should the economy improve, these changes will allow the plant to produce board at a lower cost. This could allow this plant to increase production, even if the economic down-turn continues.

Comments were received from Samone King, Olivia Honington, Bhavan Patel, Geri Orozco, and Chase Klugh, Commerce High School students, at the Public Hearing held on September 27, 2011.

Comment 1

Samone King,

“When I came here, I was close minded and completely opposed to this entire process. After talking to you guys I am more open to the idea, not completely, but I am for it.”

Comment 2

Olivia Honington,

“I am from Commerce high school. Tonight there was in my opinion, a lot more negative than there was positive. It does affect the humans, and as the lady was saying, it affects the wildlife. So, if it is affecting both, then I don’t think it should be done. It’s a negative.”

Comment 3

Bhavan Patel,

Who is going to take care of the elderly if they are affected by the toxin? And that why I am not supporting this.

Comment 4

Geri Orozco,

“I am against this because, if the chemicals were to get into the water, this is a small community, and it would affect all of us. And that’s why I am against it.”

Comment 5

Chase Klugh,

“I am from Commerce High School. I am opposed to this, due the fact that this permit that has been in place comes as a result of the competition within our economic system, and this competition increases over time usually that’s what’s going to happen to this permit. I believe it will have a downward effect. More permits will follow and the emissions and what is allowed for emission will just get higher and higher.”

EPD Response.

The comments made at the public hearing were centered on the health concerns associated with increases in HAP emissions and the health effects that may occur due to the emission increases allowed by this amendment and by possible amendments in the future.

An air quality analysis, which includes applicable emissions from existing sources, determined that the ambient impacts associated with the proposed modification will not cause or contribute to a violation of any applicable National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) or PSD increment in a Class I or Class II area. An additional analysis demonstrated that hazardous air pollutant (HAP) emissions were in compliance with the Georgia air toxics program.

Comments were received from Jill Jennings-McElheney, Founder of Micah's Mission, by Email on September 19, 2011, September 22, 2011 and September 28, 2011.

Comment 1

"How many properties has Huber bought up in their surrounding area for environmental degradation? Can you/EPD inquire of this info w/ the plant? Also the resin that Huber wants to remove restrictions, what is the formaldehyde content?"

Comment 2

"EPA has now listed formaldehyde as a known human carcinogen. The MSDS says probable. Will you please inform of this at the public meeting/hearing and explain the difference? Also, with regards to Huber's buy up of contaminated properties, when Mr. Smith says "recent" what is his timeline? It would be helpful to know what properties Huber has purchased since they began operations if possible."

Comment 3

"I hope the gathering last evening went well. I want to double check that the agency confirmed publicly that formaldehyde is now classified as a known carcinogen by EPA. Can someone verify?"

EPD Response.**Comment 1**

According to Clyde Smith, the Environmental Manager of Huber's Commerce plant, Huber has not purchased any property in Jackson or Banks Counties for "environmental degradation".

According to the Manufacturer's Safety Data Sheet (MSDS), the formaldehyde content is less than 1% in the MUPF resin used by Huber's facility.

Comment 2

The EPD is aware that the IARC classified formaldehyde as a known carcinogen, followed by a 2011 National Toxicology Program (an interagency program of the Department of Health and Human Services) action to name formaldehyde as a known human carcinogen in its 12th Report on Carcinogens. However, the EPA has not made a change in the classification of formaldehyde and still classifies it as a probable human carcinogen.

Comment 3

The EPD did discuss the current understanding of the carcinogenic effect. However, as stated above, the EPA has not classified formaldehyde as a known carcinogen.

Comments were received from Martha Mejias, Commerce citizen, by Email on September 30, 2011.

Comment 1

My husband and I were unable to attend the public hearing on 9/27/11 because of a prior commitment. However, we want to make it known that we are very opposed to amending Huber's permit to remove PSD avoidance limits, to remove restrictions on the use of MUPF resin, etc. I wanted my written comment to sound knowledgeable so I tried researching these issues. To be honest, I felt I did not have a thorough enough understanding to debate the "facts" that Huber presented. I then thought I would just give up sending in a comment, but immediately realized that must be what everyone does.

We live on Bolton Gordon Road within a half mile of the plant. My family of four all suffer with persistent allergies; yet, when we travel away from this area on vacation, our allergies clear up. A close neighbor had to close her pool for almost a month last summer because their salt water pool turned green. Tests finally revealed it was airborne chemicals from the Huber plant that had settled in the pool. Another neighbor had all fish in his small pond die. A very large number of neighbors in this community suffer with cancer or breathing difficulties. How is it possible that there is not a connection to the Huber plant in our backyard? We may not have the scientific knowledge to argue our case convincingly, but we daily live with the effects of the pollution.

Please err on the side of caution and deny this permit. This hardworking community with its many farms, creeks, ponds, wildlife, etc. love our country life with the many outdoor activities we can enjoy. Please keep our countryside beautiful and the air clean. Once it's polluted, it will be too late to correct any mistakes of leniency.

I invite you and your committee to come out to our home and we will be happy to show you around so that you can see firsthand what is at stake here.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

EPD Response.

As provided for in state and federal permitting requirements, the air quality application was reviewed to ensure the proposed modification would comply with the air rules and regulations. Air Toxics have also been considered, as required by the Georgia Air Toxic Guideline. This Guideline was established to ensure that emissions will not cause an offsite concentration of an air toxic to exceed the acceptable ambient concentrations (AAC), and so to be protective of human health. The Division believes that the draft PSD permit for Huber meets all requirements set forth by EPA and the Georgia Air Quality rules, regarding air toxics.

Comments were received from Ray Perry, Commerce citizen, by letter on October 3, 2011.

Comment 1

My family and I live close to the plant and we feel that adding 500 tons of pollution to the air around us would be very harmful to the health of our neighbors our kids and our grand kids. We have lived here since 1948 and we feel that our right to clean air should be respected.

EPD Response.

Please see response to the comment by Martha Mejias.

APPENDIX A

AIR QUALITY PERMIT

Amendment No. 2493-157-0014-V-02-3

APPENDIX B

WRITTEN COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING COMMENT PERIOD