



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Toxic Air Pollutants

What are they?

Toxic air pollutants (TAPs) are chemicals and materials that cause or are thought to cause serious problems for health and the environment. Some are particles, some are gases. Examples are arsenic, asbestos, benzene, vinyl chloride, mercury, chromium, toluene, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), radon, and beryllium.

Where do they come from?

TAPs can come from many different places including:

- Natural events (forest fires, volcanoes)
- Mobile sources (cars, vans, trucks, buses)
- Industries (factories, refineries, power plants, etc.)
- Household items (lead paint, certain cleaning products, pesticides, fluorescent lights, fire extinguishers, plastic foam products, plumbing pipes)
- Small businesses (dry cleaners, print shops, auto shops)

What are the health effects?

- Increased risk of cancer
- Poisoning
- Difficulty breathing
- Immune system damage
- Increased risk of serious illnesses
- Increased risk of death

What are the environmental effects?

- Breakdown of the “good” ozone layer
- Damage to plant and animal life cycles
- A build-up over time of large amounts of toxic substances in animals that can harm the animal or people who eat the animal (e.g. mercury in fish)

How can you protect yourself and the environment from toxic air pollutants?

- Don't use aerosol spray cans that contain CFCs.
- Buy mercury free products when possible, such as a digital thermometer for a person's temperature.
- Use environmentally friendly household products.
- Use paints with lower volatile organic compounds (VOC) content.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.scdhec.gov/environment/baq/AirPollutants>

<http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/natamain/>

DHEC's Bureau of Air Quality, Innovations Section provides information on environmental topics. Readers are encouraged to reproduce this material. For more information about air quality issues, please call (803) 898-4123 or visit our website at www.scdhec.gov/baq. Please send written correspondence to: DHEC's Bureau of Air Quality, Innovations Section, 2600 Bull Street, Columbia, SC 29201.


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