



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

NEWS RELEASE

Office of Communications
Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

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Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment orders Suncor to prevent new offsite contamination

DENVER – The Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment today issued additional orders to Suncor Energy (USA) Inc. as the company works to clean up a release of petroleum products from its Commerce City refinery.

The [new order](#) responds to liquid hydrocarbons from petroleum contamination detected on the water table at the southwest corner of Suncor’s Plant I, near the Suncor property boundary with Republic Paperboard Co., 5501 Brighton Blvd in Commerce City.

“We are concerned that the petroleum contamination may begin to move from the Suncor property to the Denver Metro Wastewater Reclamation District property in a second location,” said Walter Avramenko, leader of the Hazardous Waste Corrective Action Unit. “We also want to prevent contamination of the Burlington Ditch and impacts to indoor air quality at Republic Paperboard. We can’t afford to wait for the problem to emerge, and we believe that something must be done immediately to slow and reverse what we suspect may be happening under this section of Suncor’s property.”

The department ordered Suncor to perform the following interim measures by the specified deadlines:

- Suncor must immediately begin securing access and sampling indoor air in all Republic Paperboard Co. buildings to determine indoor air quality, comparing test results to the department’s action levels for workers including, but not limited to, benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene and xylenes. Suncor also must collect outdoor air

samples to help distinguish between vapors coming from contaminated groundwater and vapors in the outside air.

- If indoor air samples exceed worker action levels and are determined to come from contaminated groundwater, Suncor Energy must install a mitigation system on any affected buildings within seven days. All the buildings on the Republic Paperboard property must be sampled and, if necessary, mitigated by Feb. 29. Suncor also must report air sampling results and mitigation status to the department by that date.
- Suncor must inventory and sample all water taps used by employees in Republic Paperboard buildings for drinking, cooking, washing and bathing and report the results to the department by Feb. 29. Suncor also must submit detailed information about Republic Paperboard's water distribution system to the department by that date.
- Suncor must immediately begin a quick-turnaround field investigation of groundwater beneath Republic Paperboard property and the south end of the Burlington Ditch slurry wall (an underground wall designed to intercept groundwater flow) to verify that contamination has not migrated around, under or into the ditch. Results are due to the department by Jan. 31.
- Suncor must immediately begin a long-term groundwater investigation beneath Republic Paperboard property and the Burlington Ditch slurry wall to determine whether additional steps are needed to contain contamination on Suncor property, and to determine if contamination is affecting the Burlington Ditch or Republic Paperboard. This investigation will require Suncor to install new, permanent monitoring wells. Suncor must submit laboratory results to the department by March 16.
- Suncor must begin evaluating options for extending the southern end of the Burlington Ditch slurry wall to prevent contamination from migrating under the ditch. Suncor must submit a proposal to the department by March 16.

The Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division is coordinating with the department's Water Quality Control Division, the Environmental Protection Agency, Tri-County Health Department, Denver Water and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Previous orders remain in effect, including those requiring water sampling in Sand Creek and South Platte River. Suncor is responsible for cleaning up the effects of releases from its refinery regardless of how far downstream they extend.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment will continue to update the public as the situation changes and additional orders refining the cleanup operation are issued.