

**ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

[OPPTS-00276; FRL-6095-5]

**North American Regional Action Plan on Mercury; Notice of Availability for Public Comment****AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).**ACTION:** Notice of availability.

**SUMMARY:** Today's notice makes available for public comment the draft of the second phase of the North American Regional Action Plan (NARAP) on Mercury. This regional action plan stems from activities taken under the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC) between the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The NARAP represents a mutually agreed upon framework for future actions to be taken by each country either independently or collaboratively under the direction of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC).

The Mercury NARAP is being made available for public/stakeholder review to allow interested parties the opportunity to provide guidance on the nature and direction that these three North American governments should proceed in order to reduce mercury use and releases to the environment.

**DATES:** Comments, identified by the docket control number OPPTS-00276, must be received by EPA on or before October 18, 1999.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments may be submitted by mail, electronically, or in person. Please follow the detailed instructions for each method as provided in Unit I.C. of the "SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION" section. To ensure proper receipt by EPA, it is imperative that you identify docket control number OPPTS-00276 in the subject line on the first page of your response.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For general information contact: Christine Augustyniak, Associate Director, Environmental Assistance Division (7408), Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC 20460; telephone numbers: 202-554-1404 and TDD: 202-554-0551; e-mail address: TSCA-Hotline@epa.gov.

For technical information contact: Greg Susanke, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, National Program Chemicals Division (7404), Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC 20460; telephone number: 202-260-3547; fax

number: 202-260-0001; e-mail address: susanke.greg@epa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:****I. General Information****A. Does This Notice Apply to Me?**

You may be potentially affected by this notice if you use mercury in, or release mercury from processing, operations, or products. Potentially affected entities may include, but are not limited to: the automotive vehicle and equipment manufacturing sector, the mercury cell chlor-alkali sector, the dry cell battery manufacturing sector, the electrical switches and relays sector, the lamp manufacturing sector, health and dental care sectors, the users of mercury for cultural and artisanal uses, and the analytical, testing, measurement, and calibration sector. If you have any questions regarding the applicability of this notice to a particular entity, consult the technical person listed in the "FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT" section.

**B. How Can I Get Additional Information or Copies of This Document and Other Related Documents?**

1. *Electronically.* Electronic copies of this document are available from the EPA Home Page at the **Federal Register** - Environmental Documents entry for this document under "Laws and Regulations" (<http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/>). You can follow the menu to find this **Federal Register** notice using the publication date or the **Federal Register** citation for this notice. You can also obtain copies of this document and certain other available documents from the CEC Internet Home Page at <http://www.cec.org/>. On the Home Page select "CEC Resources and Publications" and then look up the entry for this document under the "Regional Action Plans" section.

2. *In person.* The Agency has established an official record for this notice under docket control number OPPTS-00276. The official record consists of the documents specifically referenced in this notice, any public comments received during an applicable comment period, and other information related to this notice, including any information claimed as Confidential Business Information (CBI). This official record includes the documents that are physically located in the docket, as well as the documents that are referenced in those documents. The public version of the official record does not include any information claimed as CBI. The public version of the official record, which includes printed, paper versions of any electronic comments submitted during

an applicable comment period, is available for inspection in the TSCA Nonconfidential Information Center, Rm. NE B-607, Waterside Mall, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC. The Center is open from 12 noon to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The telephone number of the Center is 202-260-7099.

**C. How and to Whom Do I Submit Comments?**

You may submit comments through the mail, in person, or electronically. To ensure proper receipt by EPA, it is imperative that you identify docket control number OPPTS-00276 in the subject line on the first page of your response.

1. *By mail.* Submit your written comments to: Document Control Office (7407), Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics (OPPT), Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC 20460.

2. *In person or by courier.* Deliver your written comments to: OPPT Document Control Office (DCO) in East Tower Rm. G-099, Waterside Mall, 401 M St., SW., Washington, DC. The DCO is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding legal holidays. The telephone number for the DCO is 202-260-7093.

3. *Electronically.* You may submit your comments electronically by e-mail to: [oppt.ncic@epa.gov](mailto:oppt.ncic@epa.gov). Do not submit any information electronically that you consider to be CBI. Electronic comments must be submitted as an ASCII file avoiding the use of special characters and any form of encryption. Comments will also be accepted on standard computer disks in Wordperfect 5.1/6.1 or ASCII file format. All comments in electronic form must be identified by the docket control number OPPTS-00276. Electronic comments may also be filed online at many Federal Depository Libraries.

**D. How Should I Handle CBI Information That I Want to Submit to the Agency?**

Do not submit any information electronically that you consider to be CBI. You may claim information that you submit to EPA in response to this notice as CBI by marking any part or all of that information as CBI. Information so marked will not be disclosed except in accordance with procedures set forth in 40 CFR part 2. A copy of the comment that does not contain the information claimed as CBI must be submitted for inclusion in the public version of the official record. Information not marked confidential will be included in the public version

of the official record without prior notice. If you have any questions about CBI or the procedures for claiming CBI, please consult the technical person identified in the "FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT" section.

#### *E. What Should I Consider as I Prepare My Comments for EPA?*

We invite you to provide your views on the various options we propose, new approaches we haven't considered, the potential impacts of the various options (including possible unintended consequences), and any data or information that you would like the Agency to consider during the development of the final action. You may find the following suggestions helpful for preparing your comments:

- Explain your views as clearly as possible.
- Describe any assumptions that you used.
- Provide copies of any technical information and/or data you used that support your views.
- If you estimate potential burden or costs, explain how you arrived at the estimate that you provide.
- Provide specific examples to illustrate your concerns.
- Offer alternative ways to improve the document.
- Make sure to submit your comments by the deadline in this notice.
- To ensure proper receipt by EPA, be sure to identify the docket control number assigned to this notice in the subject line on the first page of your response. You may also provide the name, date, and **Federal Register** citation.

## **II. Background**

### *A. What Action is the Agency Taking?*

EPA is representing the United States as the lead Agency in drafting not only the NARAP on Mercury but also other NARAPs on selected persistent, bioaccumulative, and toxic substances of concern. The action plans are to incorporate, as appropriate, pollution prevention principles and precautionary approaches in making recommendations to reduce risks associated with these substances.

These action plans reflect a shared commitment by the parties to work cooperatively by building upon international environmental agreements and existing policies and laws; by bringing a regional perspective to international initiatives that are in place or being negotiated with respect to persistent toxic substances; by promoting cooperation with Latin American and Caribbean nations and

with countries that have territories in the high Arctic; and by encouraging mutually consistent trade and environment policies that are conducive to the conservation, protection, and enhancement of the environment in their territories. At the same time, each action plan is unique and recognizes the differentiated responsibilities of each of the countries while taking into account each country's respective natural endowments, climate and geographical conditions, and economic, technological, and infrastructure capabilities.

The action plans reflect a long-term commitment to regional action. The sharing and transfer of information and best practices are seen as important means of enhancing national capacity for the sound management of chemicals. Other important elements and outcomes of these cooperative initiatives include collaboration and cooperation in the measurement, monitoring, modeling, research and assessment of selected persistent and toxic substances in environmental media. Such cooperation will improve the quality, availability, and relevance of the "environmental information" needed to make informed and responsible decisions throughout the implementation of the action plans.

The action plans are also intended to help facilitate the meaningful participation of the public, including nongovernmental organizations; business and industry; native North Americans; provincial, state and municipal governments; academia; and technical and policy experts. Regular public reporting of the progress that has occurred with respect to each action plan will be important to its eventual success.

### *B. What is the Agency's Authority for Taking This Action?*

The NARAP on Mercury is one of a number of such regional undertakings that stem from the NAAEC between the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. As a parallel side agreement to the North American Free Trade Agreement, the NAAEC came into force on January 1, 1994 as an overarching framework for environmental cooperation. The NAAEC established the CEC to "facilitate cooperation on the conservation, protection and enhancement of the environment in their territories." The Council (of Ministers) of the Commission agreed to Resolution 95-05 on the Sound Management of Chemicals on October 13, 1995, at its second regular meeting held in Oaxaca, Mexico. The resolution established "a working group composed of two senior officials

selected by each party whose duties pertain to the regulation or management of toxic substances and who shall work with the CEC to implement the decisions and commitments set out in this resolution." The resolution specifically calls for the development of four regional action plans for selected persistent and toxic substances as a first priority in the parties' common desire to address national and regional concerns associated with the sound management of chemicals. Mercury, as well as dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), chlordane, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), is one of the four priority substances identified by the parties for action plan development.

### **List of Subjects**

Environmental protection.

Dated: September 8, 1999.

### **Stephen L. Johnson,**

*Acting Deputy Assistant Administrator for Prevention, Pesticides and Toxic Substances.*

[FR Doc. 99-24167 Filed 9-15-99; 8:45 am]

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## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION**

### **Sunshine Act Meeting**

**AGENCY HOLDING THE MEETING:** Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

**DATE AND TIME:** Tuesday, September 28, 1999, at 2:00 P.M. (Eastern Time).

**PLACE:** Training Center in the EEOC Office Building, 1801 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20507.

**STATUS:** The meeting will be open to the public.

### **MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED:**

1. Announcement of Notation Votes, and
2. EEOC—A Year in Review and a Dialogue for the Future.

**Note:** Any matters not discussed or concluded may be carried over to a later meeting. (In addition to published notices on EEOC Commission meetings in the **Federal Register**, the Commission also provides a recorded announcement a full week in advance on future Commission meetings). Please telephone (202) 663-7100 (voice) and (202) 663-4074 (TDD) at any time for information on these meetings.

**CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Frances M. Hart, Executive Officer on (202) 663-4070.

Dated: September 14, 1999.

### **Frances M. Hart,**

*Executive Officer, Executive Secretariat.*

[FR Doc. 99-24307 Filed 9-14-99; 3:52 pm]

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