



Shell Cracker, Environmental Groups Reach Settlement

August 29, 2017



PITTSBURGH – Shell Chemical Appalachia LLC, the Clean Air Council and the Environmental Integrity Project have reached a settlement agreement that includes a fence-line monitoring program and flare testing at Shell’s petrochemical complex under construction in Beaver County, Pa.

The settlement was jointly announced late Monday. It ends the August 2015 appeal by the environmental groups of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s approval of air permit for the \$4 billion project.

“Our appeal of the air permit for the Shell facility sought to address two main pieces the permit was lacking: fence-line monitoring to detect and fix leaks and better requirements to assure the facility’s flares properly control air pollution,” said Adam Kron, senior attorney for the Environmental Integrity Project, in a prepared statement. “This settlement achieves both of these goals, and we believe the health of people living and working near this facility will be better protected as a result.”

Shell’s plant will convert – or “crack” – ethane, a natural gas liquid into ethylene and polyethylene pellets, which are used to produce a variety of plastic products.

In addition to the plant’s planned monitoring program, Shell will install and operate a fence-line monitoring program to detect fugitive emissions and implement repairs, as needed. If the monitors detect emissions above certain levels, site workers will promptly undertake a field investigation, according to the settlement. If Shell determines the facility is the source of the emissions, an appropriate response will follow.

In addition, data from the monitors, along with information on Shell’s response, will be publicly available on an easily accessible website. The fence-line monitoring program at the petrochemical facility will have passive air monitors, as well as active monitors that will continuously monitor concentrations of volatile organic compounds.

The settlement contains terms to validate the plant’s flares operate in a manner consistent with the original facility design, which meet or exceed the requirements of the Clean Air Act by destroying 98% of pollutants. Shell will monitor and maintain the flares’ heating value – a key component of its efficiency – more frequently than required in the current air permit.

The agreement also calls for Shell to test the facility’s multi-point ground flare to verify it will achieve 98% destruction efficiency under various operating conditions. If the flare must be operated differently to achieve the destruction efficiency required under the permit, Shell will seek to update its air permit accordingly.

In a statement contained in the joint announcement of the agreement, Ate Visser, vice president of the Shell project, said the company is “pleased to have reached this settlement, and now our full focus will be on delivering the facility, with its state-of-the-art operations and environmental controls, which will bring jobs and economic benefits to many western Pennsylvania families for decades to come.”

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