

January 24, 2018

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is aware of airborne fibers found near the **Lauscha Fiber International Corporation (Unifrax)** plant, located at 105 East Port Lane, Summerville, SC. DHEC will continue to monitor the situation and evaluate available data and information. DHEC is committed to ensuring that the company remains in compliance with health-protective regulations and keeping the community informed.

### **Glass Fiber Manufacturing**

Unifrax manufactures glass fibers at its Summerville facility. The manufacturing process involves melting glass pellets into small glass threads or filaments, which are then melted and formed into fibers. These glass fibers are primarily used in the manufacture of various industrial and commercial filters such as water purification filters and air filters used by hospitals and pharmaceutical companies. These filters are not manufactured at Unifrax's Summerville facility.

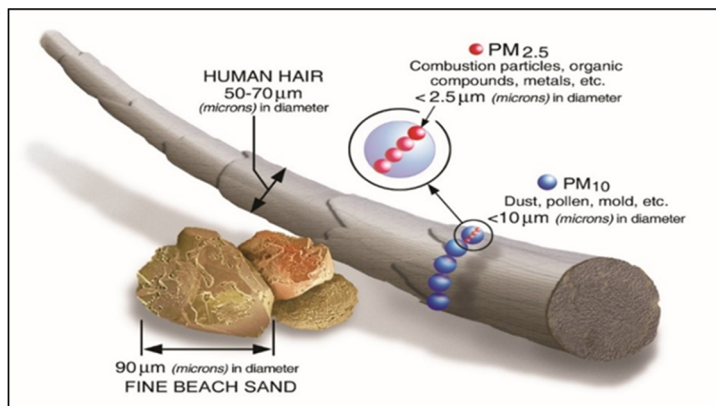
### **Health Studies on Glass Fibers**

Glass fiber is not classified as hazardous or as a hazardous waste by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There is no evidence that exposure to fibrous glass dust causes disease or cancer in humans. Glass fibers can irritate the skin, eyes, and respiratory tract depending on the level of exposure. People with pre-existing lung-related health problems, like asthma, may find exposure to airborne fibers or dust at significant enough levels to be irritating. There is, however, no data indicating lasting health effects to the lungs once exposure to the fibers has been removed.

Glass fibers are classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as Group 2B "possibly carcinogenic," based on studies where fibers were implanted or injected into the lungs of study animals. These studies are controversial because they did not involve the inhalation of these fibers, which is the primary route of exposure for humans. Other IARC Group 2B possible carcinogens include cell phone use and Teflon® used on non-stick cookware.

### **DHEC Air Permit**

DHEC issued an air operating permit to Lauscha, which is now owned by Unifrax, on March 1, 2001, to manufacture glass fibers. The company's current operating permit was issued on May 13, 2016, and will expire on June 30, 2021. The air permit allows Unifrax to emit a limited amount of particulate matter (PM), PM with a general diameter of less than 10 micrometers (PM<sub>10</sub>), and PM with a general diameter of



*Particulate Size Comparison. The US EPA has set health-based standards for PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> that all regulated facilities must meet nationwide.*

less than 2.5 micrometers (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO) and other regulated air pollutants into the air. The air permit has emission limits based on federal and state air quality standards, which are set to be protective of public health and the environment. The permit also contains monitoring, recordkeeping, and reporting requirements the facility must meet to ensure compliance with its emission limits. Permit conditions also include facility maintenance and housekeeping requirements to minimize offsite PM emissions. The permit requires multiple drum and bag filters and cyclones to be used to control PM, PM<sub>10</sub>, and PM<sub>2.5</sub> emissions.

### **Addressing the Releases**

DHEC is actively pursuing enforcement action against the company for air permit and regulatory violations. The enforcement process will include a compliance schedule for permanent corrective actions and the assessment of civil penalties. The Enforcement Order will be available to the public once finalized.

In the meantime, Unifrax has taken actions to minimize the releases. The company has installed probes in the drum filter stacks to activate an alarm when possible tears are detected so that corrective actions can be taken immediately. When process upsets have occurred, the company has shut down portions of the plant and made necessary repairs. The company has also improved its maintenance schedules and performed other system upgrades.

The best permanent solution, however, is to fully upgrade the PM air pollution control system, which will include the installation of new baghouses. This new control system will take several months to construct and install. The company has indicated that a construction permit application will be submitted to DHEC in January 2018. DHEC will expedite the review and issuance of the needed permits so construction of the upgraded air pollution control system can begin promptly.

### **Air Monitoring**

Unifrax has hired a third-party company to install air quality monitors in the area to measure PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations. DHEC will also install a monitor in the area to measure PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations. DHEC will be evaluating the data from all the monitors closely to determine if additional actions should be taken. DHEC will continue to assess any and all potential impacts to public health from regulated facilities.

### **Reporting Releases**

Contact the DHEC Regional Office in Charleston at 843-953-0150 to report fibers found on your personal property. DHEC follows up on every complaint by visiting the facility and conducting an investigation into possible causes for excess emissions. You may also notify Jay Fuller, Interim Plant Manager of Unifrax, at 843-376-2121, to report any fibers found on your personal property.

### **Staying Informed**

DHEC is committed to keeping the community informed. DHEC will hold a community meeting in the near future to address concerns and to share more information.

***Please share this information with others who may be interested.***

