

## More air testing to occur after repairs completed at fiber-spewing plant

By Jenna-Ley Harrison [jharrison@journalscene.com](mailto:jharrison@journalscene.com) Jan 2, 2019



Justin Rhodes, an industrial hygienist with GHD, installs an air monitoring station in the yard of a home in Clemson Terrace.

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Earlier this week residents living near a Summerville-area manufacturing plant, notorious for spontaneously emitting airborne fiberglass onto their properties, received the good news they've been anticipating the last year.

All equipment fixes at Lauscha Fiber International, located at 105 Eastport Lane, have been completed, according to Plant Manager Brian Mellet, in a letter to residents dated Dec. 31.

Renovations commenced in June and included installation of pollution control devices, also known as baghouses, according to the letter.

Through a 2017 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, the Journal Scene learned that complaints about the plant dated back to 2001.

Documents showed that for years area businesses and neighborhoods had discovered little, white fabric-like pieces covering their properties—lawns, cars, parking lots. Some pieces appeared nearly as large as golf balls; others were barely visible and hidden among blades of grass.

Officials with Unifrax LLC, Lauscha's parent company which took over the plant in 2013, told residents they knew of the plant's equipment issues upon purchasing it—and initially carried out minor repairs. But the random emissions continued.

In the letter, officials also promised to conduct follow-up air quality testing now that the new equipment is in place. Starting this month, both DHEC and GHD Consultants will conduct the sampling, expected to last a month. Upon completion there will be a public meeting revealing the results.

GHD Consultants first conducted air testing in nearby subdivisions in January 2018, after concerned residents urged Unifrax officials to hire a third party to determine if the emissions were a health hazard.

Both DHEC and company officials said the tests showed the particulates to be harmless and met with community members in March for an informational meeting on the data. Some residents

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were appeased by the news; others said they still couldn't be sure of possible long-term effects of fiber exposure.

The plant, which specializes in melting glass beads into microfibers that are used in certain large-scale batteries and air filtration devices, is one of 27 manufacturing facilities Unifrax operates across the globe.

Anyone with questions is encouraged to email Mellet at [bmellet@unifrax.com](mailto:bmellet@unifrax.com).

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#### Jenna-Ley Harrison

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