



[courier-journal.com](#) | [Local News](#) | [Sports](#)

[MomsLikeMe.com](#) | [KentuckianaPets.com](#) | [Metromix](#)

Other Editions: [Mobile](#) | [News Feeds](#) | [E-Newsletters](#)

[Find it: Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Apartments](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Dating](#) | [Coupons](#)

[Local News](#)

[National/Global News](#)

[Links](#)

[Forum](#)

[Your photos](#)

[Earth Kids](#)



**Comment, blog & share photos**

[Log in](#) | [Become a member](#) | [Search people](#)

**GET C-J NEWS ON THE GO**

[Mobile sites](#) | [iPhone version](#) | [News text alerts](#)

## Chemical spill suspected as Beechmont vapor cause

**EPA official cites overflow from tank**

BY JAMES BRUGGERS • [JBRUGGERS@COURIER-JOURNAL.COM](mailto:JBRUGGERS@COURIER-JOURNAL.COM) • FEBRUARY 8, 2010

[Print this page](#) [E-mail this article](#) [Share](#) [?](#)

Authorities suspect a chemical spill — not contaminated groundwater — caused pungent vapors that seeped into some homes in the Beechmont neighborhood last week, sending at least one person to a hospital with a diagnosis of “chemical exposure.”



Officials last week could not pinpoint the source of the problem, saying they were looking into two possibilities: a wastewater spill reported by Nuplex Resins last Monday, or groundwater under the plant that might have been contaminated.

Art Smith, the on-scene coordinator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, said Monday night that the investigation points to an overflow from a tank.

“Some had run out into the street and was actually getting in the sewer,” he said at a meeting with about 75 residents in an auditorium at Olmsted Academy North that turned contentious.

Some residents expressed outrage at the response by company and Louisville metro government officials.

A Nuplex spokesman apologized for the spill and said the company would help residents recover costs they had incurred as a result.

Mike Wright, the environmental and safety officer for the company, said residents should call 587-3786 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the next week to discuss their claims.

“I am here to let you know we are apologizing for this incident,” he said. “We know it had impact on folks in the community.”

Officials from the Metropolitan Sewer District, the Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness and the Louisville Metro Air Pollution Control District also sent representatives to the meeting, which was punctuated by the shouting of questions and concerns from some residents.

Dr. Matt Zahn, the health department’s medical director, said none of the chemicals — mainly xylene — were detected at levels that would cause any long-term health effects.

“At levels we’re finding, it’s an irritant. And it’s unpleasant,” Zahn said.

The meeting’s most emotional moment came after Zahn mentioned a news report of a child being treated at Kosair Children’s Hospital after suffering an asthma attack. The child was diagnosed with “chemical exposure,” according to his discharge papers.

Zahn said xylene is not typically associated with respiratory problems.

That infuriated Cherie Wentworth, the child’s mother.

“We thought our child was dying,” she said of her 13-year-old son, Calvin. “He was turning blue. What if this had been your home and your child?”

Zahn then handed the microphone to Henry Spiller, a toxicologist with the Kentucky Regional Poison Control Center, who confirmed that xylene can indeed trigger respiratory problems.



Cherie Wentworth, center, with Carol and Roger Schaf, voices concerns Monday night about the Nuplex Resins incident in the Beechmont area. Wentworth’s son, Calvin, 13, was hospitalized for “chemical exposure.” (By Maggie Huber, Special to The Courier-Journal)

**PHOTO GALLERIES**

[Chemical release meeting](#)

Contextual linking provided by Topix



### More Environment headlines

[U.S. proposes new climate service](#)

### Latest headlines

[Bible study rules for public schools proposed](#)

[Stocks jump on hopes for Greece debt assistance](#)

[Snuff tax changes rejected](#)

[Bill allowing winery expansion advances](#)

[Waterfront park summer crew gets funding](#)

ADS BY PULSE 360

[Get Listed Here](#)

Zahn said after the meeting he did not elaborate but understands xylene can cause respiratory problems, but it mainly is associated with neurological issues.

The incident, which MSD has said may have affected as many as 50 homes, began Feb. 1 when some residents began complaining of irritating chemical odors in their homes coming through their basement drains, toilets, shower drains and sinks.

Some residents complained about a history of odors from the plant, which has operated at 4730 Crittenden Drive for more than six decades.

Before the meeting, one resident, Lisa Stretch, said she wanted to know what had been done to stop the vapors, and the nature of any long-term problems.

"What will they do to make sure this doesn't happen again?" Stretch asked.

Wright said the company, which employs 69 and makes raw materials for paint, hired an engineer to determine how the leak occurred. After that assessment, the company will fix any problems, he said.

Neighborhood residents also complained about delays in getting information.

Louisville Fire Chief Greg Frederick took responsibility for the city's lag in notification and said he would look for ways to improve community notification procedures.

In 2003, The Courier-Journal quoted residents as saying vapors had come into their homes dating back to at least 1999, when the company was known as Akzo Nobel Coatings Inc.

Monitoring by MSD in people's basements and near the plant at the time identified similar chemicals, but MSD officials said last week the agency was unable to prove the chemicals came from the plant. At that time in 2003, MSD rejected neighbors' calls for testing soil and groundwater.

EPA officials have said state environmental regulators will oversee a company assessment of groundwater quality under and near the plant.

Smith said Monday that the EPA and the state would ensure last week's spill will be cleaned up and any environmental problems that might be identified during the groundwater study would be addressed.

"We understand you are angry," said Lisa Gaus, who oversees industrial discharges for MSD. "We understand there's a history of odors. It's being addressed."

Reporter James Bruggers can be reached at (502) 582-4645.

**In Your Voice** | READ REACTIONS TO THIS STORY

Hide Comments ▲

You must be logged in to leave a comment. [Login](#) | [Register](#)

Submit

#### Shen Yun in the Kentucky Center

World Premier of millennia old Chinese dance & music traditions.

[www.kyshow.com](http://www.kyshow.com)

#### Louisville \$12.5 Auto Insurance?

Stop Over Paying For Car Insurance. Submit Zip Code For Local Deals

[411USAInsurance.com/Auto](http://411USAInsurance.com/Auto)

#### Louisville Refinance at 4.25% FIXED!

No hidden fees! (4.4% APR) Get 4 FREE Quotes! No SSN reqd.

[www.LendGo.com](http://www.LendGo.com)



Partners: [Jobs: CareerBuilder.com](#) [Cars: Cars.com](#) [Apartments: Apartments.com](#) [Shopping: ShopLocal.com](#)

[HOME](#) | [NEWS](#) | [OBITS](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [DERBY](#) | [BUSINESS](#) | [FEATURES](#) | [ENTERTAINMENT](#) | [METROMIX](#) | [OPINION](#) | [NEIGHBORHOODS](#) | [MOMS](#) | [MEDIA](#) | [BUY/SELL](#) | [CONTACT US](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Subscribe](#)

Copyright ©2008 ...

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#), updated March 2007.