2.3.2 Air Toxics

Air toxics are air borne pollutants that can cause cancer or other human health effects. The total nationwide cancer incident due to outdoor concentration of air toxics in the United States has been estimated to range from approximately 1700 to 2700 excess cancer cases per year. The Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 identified 189 compounds as air toxics.

Air toxics come from thousands of point and area sources including process sources such as chemical production and fugitive sources which are on-site and resulting from leaks in pumps, valves, flanges, storage tanks, transportation railcars, and trucks.

The most common route of exposure to air toxics is inhalation after they are emitted from stacks. Ingestion is another form of

exposure. After the toxics become airborne and then fall back to the earth, they are taken up by crops, animals and fish that are consumed by humans. Toxics enter the body through these routes and are accumulated over time and they have the potential to become highly concentrated in human fatty tissue and breast milk.