Chemical company plans to add 2 new facilities

By NANCY REGEN
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ST. GABRIEL — Officials of a local chemical corporation announced a combined $71 million project Monday night that will create 70 permanent jobs and add more than $2 million to tax coffers of area parishes.

An informal meeting was held at the American Legion Hall by Ciba-Geigy Corp. to inform residents of the project, which will include a unit to manufacture dyes used in the textile industry and a unit to produce chemicals for a variety of uses.

The two projects are part of the chemical company’s plan to expand and diversify, plant manager Tom Clausi said.

The projects are separate from a proposed $50 million multipurpose incinerator project awaiting approval from the state Department of Environmental Quality.

Although Ciba-Geigy has not yet applied for a permit from the DEQ for the two proposed plants, Clausi expects the projects to be completed by October 1991.

The largest of the two proposed projects is a multipurpose dyestuff facility, which will produce 23 types of dyes for use in sheets, sportswear, towels, household carpet and paper products.

The dye facility will create 550 construction jobs, 70 permanent jobs, and add more than $2 million to the Iberville Parish sales and use tax collection, Clausi said. The company also expects to save more than $70,000 a year in inventory taxes on that facility alone, the manager added.

The dye plant will produce dyes formerly made in Tom’s River, N.J., and the company plant in Switzerland. Clausi said the St. Gabriel plant is a restructuring of the dye processing and will utilize more updated technology suited for the U.S. market.

The second project announced Monday is a relocation of a Sequestrene facility from McIntosh, Ala., which will produce formaldehyde, amines, caustic soda, and hydrogen peroxide for use in the photographic, textile and food preservative industries.

That plant is expected to generate $60,000 a year for the parish through the sales and use tax and $3,500 through inventory tax. About 200 construction jobs are expected to be created, but no new permanent jobs. Of the $60 million investment in the dyestuff facility, 20 percent is designated for pollution abatement equipment, Clausi added.

Some residents at the meeting protested the proposed plants’ air emissions, but Clausi says the small amounts of nitrogen oxide (NOX) emissions are “impossible to measure” against tonnage of the larger plants in the state.”

“There’s no question we (chemical plants) need to reduce emissions,” Clausi added after the meeting. “Air emissions and solid waste tonnage continuously need to be reduced... That’s my environmental philosophy.”

Clausi added that he is a member of a seven-parish area task force for protecting the Ozone layer, which includes Iberville Parish. He said figures showed NOX emissions were 119,000 tons for the seven parishes and he believes Ciba-Geigy’s expected 18,000 pounds of NOX emissions a year was “negligible” because it was a small amount.

“One pound is too much when you’re talking about the environment,” resident Jim Gentry said. “We’re already in a non-attainment area and I don’t think we should be adding to the numbers by increasing emissions.”

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