DEQ official shoulders decades of air problems

By BOB ANDERSON
Environmental editor

Records show Baton Rouge area industries emit millions of pounds of toxic chemicals annually into parishes that are among the country’s lung cancer hot spots.

Baton Rouge continues to violate federal ozone standards a number of times a year, and some local physicians have noted an increase in patients with respiratory complaints during periods of high ozone.

The area is trying to expand its industrial base to bolster an oil-drained economy, but air pollution problems are making it difficult for major firms to locate here.

Those are a few of the problems that fell on the shoulders of Mike McDaniel seven months ago when he became assistant secretary for air in the Department of Environmental Quality.

He inherited decades of air problems at a time when solutions are being demanded from large segments of the population. So far, both environmentalists and industry representatives give him good marks.

The issue of high lung cancer rates in Louisiana and whether they can be related to toxic emissions or explained by smoking and other habits has been

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Industrial hydrocarbon emissions have been reduced by 82 percent since 1977. However, ozone pollution has not been solved yet. One expert suggests the state should be encouraging nitrogen oxides, which reduce hydrocarbons in the atmosphere. Rather than try to reduce hydrocarbon emissions, Dr. Bob Templet has taken a positive step by working on the non-emission problem. This is the future strategy, and it's not in anyone's best interest to have huge emissions of ethylene and propylene which threaten to cause global warming.

The ozone problem can be solved, Malek-Wiley doesn't believe the air is unhealthy. Kleiner said. "There's no question that we are in a situation," she says. "So often the worst polluting cars are the oldest, driven by the poorest citizens, and legislators are not willing to force (them) into a new market."

It's a self-imposed reduction," he says. "It's not just an industrial problem." Malek-Wiley says she has been working on a long-term strategy to solve the ozone problem. The first step in solving the problem is to identify the industries that contribute the most to the problem.

"It's a more technical area, and it's harder to measure results," he says. "We don't want to shortchange the public if we're not going to deliver results." Malek-Wiley says she has been working on a long-term strategy to solve the ozone problem. The first step in solving the problem is to identify the industries that contribute the most to the problem.

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