Sugar refiners ordered to reduce stack pollutants

State air quality officials have issued compliance orders to seven sugar refineries, citing pollution incidents that occurred during this winter's refining season.

The companies were cited for emitting excess particulate matter into the atmosphere and have been ordered to add pollution control equipment.

"It's an economic hardship, but it won't cause us to close down," said J.R. Roane Jr. of Jeanerette Sugar Co. in Jeanerette. He said that the company has been forced to add pollution control equipment each year for the past eight years and that the "impact adds up."

The air pollution equipment the state has ordered his firm to install before the 1983 grinding season will cost about $130,000, he said.

Part of the company's program is to emit less pollution by making the boilers more efficient, which also means it can save money on fuel. Both Vroon and Roane suggested that pollution control equipment for sugar refineries should be different than for chemical companies.

"What we emit is not toxic," said Vroon. "It's also harder for sugar refiners to pay for the equipment because they operate only about 80 days a year, while chemical companies operate all year," said Roane.

These are things that the Department of Natural Resources has taken into account in enforcing the sugar refineries to come into compliance with state air regulations, said Gus Von Bodungen, who heads the air program.

The state has brought the sugar refineries along more slowly than some other industries because some of them have been having hard times economically, he said.

The problem with emissions from the refineries is mainly one of particulate matter and not of toxic materials, he said.

"It's more of a nuisance than a health hazard," the air chief said.

The particulate problem has increased in the past couple of years, said Von Bodungen, because the refineries have had to start burning bagasse rather than natural gas.

While the emissions may not be a severe health hazard, they do need to be cleaned up, he said.

The state issued orders to:

• Harry L. Laws & Co. of Brusly, ordering that the Cinclare mill install scrubbers on some boiler stacks by Sept. 15, 1983, and on others by Oct. 1, 1984.

• Savoie Sugar Industries of Belle Rose, ordering that the company install scrubbers by Oct. 1, 1983.

• Glenwood Sugar Cooperative of Napoleonville, ordering that the company install scrubbers on some of its boiler stacks by Oct. 1, 1983, and on others by Oct. 1, 1984.

• Dugas and LeBlanc Ltd. of Paincourtville, ordering that the Westfield Sugar Factory install scrubbers on some of its boiler stacks by Oct. 1, 1983, and on others by Oct. 1, 1984.

• Alma Plantation of Lakeland, ordering that the company install scrubbers on some stacks by Oct. 1, 1983, and on others by Oct. 1, 1984.

• St. James Sugar Cooperative of St. James, ordering that the company install scrubbers on its boiler stacks by Oct. 1, 1983.

• Jeanerette Sugar Co. of Jeanerette, ordering that the company install scrubbers by Oct. 1, 1983.