



Environment group GASP petitions Board of Health to disapprove permit for ABC Coke in Tarrant

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BIRMINGHAM, Alabama – The Jefferson County Board of Health recently renewed the operating permit for ABC Coke, a coke processing facility along Highway 79 in Tarrant, but health advocacy group GASP has requested a hearing with the board and wants the permit disapproved.

In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency named Drummond Co., which owns ABC Coke, **as one of five companies "potentially responsible" for contamination** found in the soil of more than 400 properties in Collegeville, Harriman Park and Fairmont neighborhoods. The ABC Coke permit was up for renewal this year, and GASP filed a 175-page comment on the draft of the new permit with recommendations to reduce emissions. After an EPA review period, the permit was renewed in August without the recommendations, according to a GASP news release.

GASP filed a petition Tuesday with the Jefferson County Board of Health requesting a hearing on ABC Coke's permit. In addition to requesting the proceeding with the Board of Health, GASP also filed a formal request with the EPA for additional air monitoring in the neighborhoods of Fairmont, Collegeville, Harriman Park, North Birmingham and Tarrant.

"The suffering in north Birmingham communities is an environmental injustice," the letter from GASP Outreach Director Kirsten Bryant says. "Additional monitoring is required to reverse the disproportionate burden of air pollution in these communities. On a larger scale, Birmingham has some of the dirtiest air in the nation. Addressing these facilities will improve the air quality for the entire region."

Part of the permit renewal process included open public meetings. At a meeting in Tarrant in March, **Jason Howanitz, who works for the department of health and wrote the ABC Coke permit, said the new permit included steps to reduce pollution such as a sprinkler system to keep dust from blowing.** At that time Howanitz also said monitoring showed the plant was in compliance and chemicals were at acceptable levels.