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DEQ partners with industry to form information workgroup

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has partnered with the Information Exchange Workgroup. The Information Exchange Workgroup is a collaboration of Louisiana’s petroleum refining and chemical manufacturing industries, which was formed to provide information on environmental protection, identify the most common causes of upsets and malfunctions and provide expertise from industry leaders on efficiency measures. The workgroup also facilitates the identification and sharing of best management practices and other strategies to minimize emissions.

To date, 40 industries throughout the state have participated by providing information via a confidential survey on industry practices.

“When we began working on the Information Exchange Workgroup, we were thinking 16 industry participants would be a good start,” said DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch. “It is extra encouraging that we have 40 on board. Environmental education goes a long way in accident prevention and environmental improvements. When industry experts can share their experiences, both positive and negative, others can benefit. Already, we have heard of one industry sharing their experiences with equipment upgrades that led to environmental and cost-cutting success.”

The efforts conducted by DEQ’s permitting, surveillance and enforcement activities continue to result in improved air quality in Louisiana. For example, Baton Rouge, which was formerly designated as a severe ozone nonattainment area, is now in attainment with both the 1-hour and 1997 8-hour ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). Further, sulfur dioxide concentrations in West Baton Rouge Parish are now compliant with the 1-hour sulfur dioxide NAAQS. Finally, emissions associated with unauthorized discharges, as reported to DEQ’s Emissions Reporting and Inventory Center, have decreased by 41 percent since 2008. The partnership between DEQ and the Information Exchange Workgroup is an effort to ensure this trend continues.

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