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In this issue:

- 1- WMO bulletins on the state of the ozone layer in the Antarctic
- 2- Scientists Report Long-Term Outlook for Ozone Layer Recovery Good
- 3- Ft. Mead Lab Investigating CFCs in "String Confetti"
- 4- Pest Rule Will Have a Few Bugs, Critics Say
- 5- Ozone-Depleting Chemical Sold to Meth Labs
- 6- Replace Your Chlorinated Solvents !

GLOBAL

1- WMO bulletins on the state of the ozone layer in the Antarctic

From May to mid-August the meteorological conditions in the Antarctic stratosphere were close to the 1995-2004 average, colder than 2004, but a little warmer than in 2003. The total ozone column along the edge of the Antarctic air mass (vortex) is significantly smaller than at the same time in 2004 and also somewhat smaller than in 2003, when the largest ozone hole on record occurred.

It is still too early in the season to give a reliable statement about the size and depth of this year's Antarctic ozone hole. WMO, in collaboration with the ozone science community, is using ozone observations and meteorological data to keep a close eye on the development during the coming weeks and months.

The Secretariat of the World Meteorological Organization issues bulletins containing information on the state of the ozone layer in the Antarctic at roughly two-week intervals from August to November. The bulletins are based on data provided by WMO Members which operate ozone monitoring stations in the southern hemisphere and satellites to observe ozone globally.

Download/view: Bulletin 1/2005 <http://www.wmo.ch/news/images/ozonebulletin1.pdf>

Source: World Meteorological Organization <http://www.wmo.ch/web/arep/gawozobull05.html>

2- Scientists Report Long-Term Outlook for Ozone Layer Recovery Good

The UN World Meteorological Organization (WMO) says the long-term outlook for the healing of the Earth's ozone layer is good. But, WMO scientists say they expect the ozone hole to get worse over the next few years, before it gets better.

The World Meteorological Organization says the ozone hole over Antarctica usually does not reach its maximum size until mid to late September. But, it says scientists already are seeing the first signs of ozone destruction. It says the ozone hole is expected to deepen and may become worse than last year, but depletion probably will not reach record levels as it did in 2003.

WMO ozone expert, Geir Braathen, says the thinning of the ozone layer is likely to continue for as long as ozone-depleting substances, mainly chlorofluorocarbons and halons, remain in the atmosphere.

"We see that the atmospheric concentrations of ozone depleting substances have leveled off and is about to decline. But, it will still take several decades before these substances have disappeared from the atmosphere before they are broken down. They have a long lifetime in the atmosphere, so they will stay there for decades. So, we expect annually recurring ozone holes to take place until maybe the middle of this century," he said.

Chlorofluorocarbons used as refrigerants, in aerosol sprays and as solvents are responsible for the destruction of the ozone, which filters out harmful ultra-violet radiation from the sun. Scientists attribute the rise in global skin cancers and cataracts to the loss of ozone.

These harmful man-made chemicals are banned under an international treaty known as the Montreal Protocol. Mr. Braathen says western industrialized countries have phased them out. However, he notes, the treaty allows developing countries to phase out these substances over a longer period of time.

The WMO scientist says loss will continue as long as the stratosphere contains an excess of ozone depleting substances. He says recovery is occurring, but slowly.

"We still expect ozone holes to appear annually and that they actually might be a little bit worse over the next five to 10 years and then, the situation will start to improve...In the long-term, the problem is probably solved. So, if we think, let us say 50 years ahead, the ozone hole problem might actually be solved," he added.

Mr. Braathen says the large ozone hole over Antarctica poses no problem to human health because the continent is so sparsely populated. But, he says the dangers increase when the ozone hole develops over the Arctic, which is surrounded by densely populated regions, especially in Europe and Asia.

Source: VOA News, 23 August 2005, By Lisa Schlein, <http://www.voanews.com/english/2005-08-23-voa30.cfm>

NORTH AMERICA

3- Ft. Mead Lab Investigating CFCs in "String Confetti"

EPA's Ft. Meade laboratory in Maryland was asked to investigate party products to determine if they contained chlorofluorocarbons or other banned ozone-depleting substances.

EPA inspectors collected aerosol cans from a variety of party supply stores located across the United States. Party string spray cans from several different countries were analyzed and some were found to contain a banned substance, chlorodifluoromethane, a chlorofluorocarbon commonly known as R22.

EPA's follow-up actions include possible enforcement actions and the development of a public information sheet pending approval of the final report on the investigation.

Source: Environmental Resource Center <http://www.ercweb.com>

4- Pest Rule Will Have a Few Bugs, Critics Say

A U.S. plan to keep a forest-eating beetle out of wood packaging in imports boosts use of an ozone-depleting, highly toxic chemical.

WASHINGTON — Tosha Cooper had never seen anything like the beetle creeping past her office at the Rox Pro warehouse in the Sacramento suburbs. It was black with white spots and inch-long antennae, she said, and was "as long as my index finger."

Worried that it might have come from crates just arrived from China, she searched the Internet for "black spotted beetle china."

"As soon as I got it, a pest alert popped up that said to contact authorities immediately," she said.

If the bugs — forest-devouring Asian longhorned beetles — had gotten loose, the U.S. Forest Service says, they could have destroyed Sacramento's urban forest and potentially moved on to oak woodlands throughout the state.

The bugs should never have made it out of China. Like all wood packaging from China, the crates were certified pest-free.

On Sept. 16, the U.S. Department of Agriculture will impose a new rule meant to prevent such invasions. But critics say it will do nothing to prevent situations like the one in Sacramento.

And, they add, it will increase use of a highly toxic, ozone-destroying chemical that other industries and countries are struggling to eliminate.

Under the new rule, anyone sending wood pallets or crates to the United States must either heat them to a temperature that kills any bugs or fumigate them with the pesticide methyl bromide and then certify that the treatment has taken place.

Environmentalists and worker-safety advocates have fought the use of methyl bromide in agriculture since the 1980s. Now they have been joined by defenders of native forests, who say pests will slip through the new controls.

Instead of using wood pallets treated with chemicals or heat, these critics want shippers to use plywood, plastic or metal containers.

An international treaty, the Montreal Protocol, requires American farmers to stop using methyl bromide because it destroys the ozone layer. The chemical was banned in January 2004 except in limited "critical use" cases. As a result, farmers have cut their use of the chemical by two-thirds since the early 1990s.

But worldwide use of the chemical for fumigating pallets increased from 12,000 tons to 20,000 tons between 2002 and 2004, according to the U.N. Environment Program. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration estimates that fumigation contributes 40% to 45% of the methyl bromide in the atmosphere.

Critics and advocates of the new policy agree that the rule will increase the chemical's use.

The ozone treaty allows countries to use the chemical to kill invasive pests. But at least one foreign government is concerned that the new rule will lead to backsliding on the ozone agreement. Martijn Hildebrand, of the Directorate for Climate Change and Industry in the Netherlands, said that pest control was harming the ozone layer. He said in an e-mail that he wanted the chemical's use on wood products to be limited and for shippers to move to other types of pallets.

Although excessive methyl bromide use harms the ozone layer, even many critics say that it kills bugs when applied correctly. But foresters worry it won't be. Under the rule, pallets and crates will be stamped with a trademarked logo certifying that they have been treated.

"There's a problem of counterfeiting," said David Doniger, policy director at the Natural Resources Defense Council's Climate Center. "Untreated wood can be marked as if treated."

Melissa O'Dell, a spokeswoman for the Agriculture Department's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, agreed.

"Customs and Border Protection officers will look to validate that the wood packaging material has a mark, not that the mark is valid," she said.

Customs and Border Protection spokeswoman Erlinda Byrd said her agency had a protocol for dealing with counterfeit marks but did not elaborate, citing law-enforcement concerns.

Edgar Deomano, technical director of the National Wood Pallet and Container Assn., said he supported the new rules and opposed a mandatory shift from raw wood. Still, he noted, shippers in "most small developing countries" are likely to have trouble with the new rule.

At international negotiations, he said, they complained "that they'd have a hard time complying. They don't have facilities for fumigation or for heat treatment."

William Aley, the USDA official who is overseeing implementation of the new rule, said the United States was encouraging those countries to use heat treatment. Solar heating is an option for nations in the tropics, he added.

That's not enough for Frank Carl, agriculture commissioner of Sacramento County. Though inspectors found only three Asian longhorned beetles, all at the Rox Pro warehouse, Carl is now part of a \$752,000 effort to ensure that the infestation is contained.

In urban areas of New York, New Jersey and Illinois, where the beetle has previously gotten loose, almost 10,000 trees have been cut down. The Forest Service predicts eradication will eventually cost \$300 million.

The Forest Service has speculated that the beetle, also known as a borer, could devastate North American hardwood forests if it gets out of the cities. The worst impact would likely be in the eastern United States. Potential economic losses are estimated at more than \$600 billion.

"In my view," Carl said, "the 100% effective method for keeping out Asian longhorned borer is to use manufactured wood only for packaging."

Doniger, an expert on ozone issues who worked in the Environmental Protection Agency during the Clinton administration, said the Agriculture Department had once agreed to look into banning wood pallets. But the Bush administration, he said, "blew off" the agreement.

Aley, a senior import specialist at the USDA, said the new rule strongly suggested that shippers use alternatives to wood packaging. But, he noted, "the government doesn't have much legal authority over conveyances of cargo. The secretary of Agriculture has specific laws to protect American agriculture based on the commodity, not the conveyance."

He also said a ban could lead to problems with the World Trade Organization, which oversees global trade issues, including invasive pests.

"We export wood pallets just like we have them coming in," he said. "If we forbid them from certain countries, there's an unfair trade balance going on."

Most important, he said, was the issue of cost: In China, a wood pallet is \$2, plywood \$8 and plastic \$15. That cost difference, multiplied by millions of pallets, would end up affecting consumers.

"I don't know the cost," Carl said. "But what's the cost of losing our urban forest to the longhorned beetle?"

Aley acknowledged that some pests would get through the new system. Shippers sometimes shore up a load with an extra piece of lumber or even a fresh tree branch, he said, adding, "You'd be amazed at what you find in there."

Inspectors will still examine some shipments, searching for signs of infestation. And Aley said he hoped that there would be more people like Cooper, the manager in Sacramento, who would report pest invasions before they got out of control.

But it won't be Cooper herself. After reporting the pests, she said, she was disciplined — and has left Rox Pro.

Source: Los Angeles Times, 14 August 2005, By Steven Bodzin
<http://www.latimes.com/news/science/environment/la-na-beetles14aug14,1,5970990.story?coll=la-news-environment>

5- Ozone-Depleting Chemical Sold to Meth Labs

NEW YORK, New York, August 15, 2005 (ENS) - A New York man and a New Jersey man have been convicted of conspiring to evade \$1.9 million in excise taxes due on sales of an ozone-depleting chemical called trichlorotrifluoroethane (CFC-113). The two men were supplying the chemical to a U.S. company that resold it for use in illegal methamphetamine labs.

A jury returned the guilty verdicts against Dov Shellef and William Rubenstein on July 28, following a five-week trial before U. S. District Judge Joanna Seybert in Central Islip, New York.

Shellef, of Great Neck, New York, was also convicted of 87 counts of wire fraud, tax evasion, subscribing to false tax returns and money laundering. Rubenstein, of Colts Neck, New Jersey, was also convicted of wire fraud.

The federal Clean Air Act banned the continued importation and production of CFC's in the United States in 1996, though manufacturers were permitted to sell and export CFC that had been stockpiled prior to the ban.

CFC's are used primarily as refrigerants and industrial solvents, and when released into the air migrate into the upper atmosphere and destroy ozone, a naturally occurring gaseous compound that protects the earth from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation.

These chemicals are subject to a substantial excise tax - imposed to discourage their use and to promote the transition to more ozone-friendly replacement products. The excise tax applies to domestic sales of stockpiled CFCs, but not sales for export.

Shellef, who owned two businesses involved in the purchase and sale of CFC-113, and Rubenstein - who also controlled two businesses involved in the purchase, packaging, warehousing, shipping and sale of CFC-113 - purchased large quantities of the chemical.

The defendants represented to the manufacturers that they intended to export the product, so the manufacturers did not collect or pay any excise tax on the product.

Beginning in July 1997, knowing that they had purchased the CFC-113 tax-free, the defendants illegally diverted the product to domestic customers.

To conceal these domestic sales, the defendants removed references to the original manufacturers on drums of the chemical and relabeled the product. They created false shipping documents stating that the product was being sold "For Export Only" and "Reclaimed," knowing that the new product being sold domestically.

For all of the domestic sales of CFC-113, the unpaid excise taxes totaled approximately \$1.9 million.

"The defendants defrauded the government of nearly two million dollars of tax revenue and disregarded the environmental harm that their scheme posed," said U.S. Attorney Roslynn Mauskopf.

The investigation began as Environmental Protection Agency and Drug Enforcement Administration agents traced the supply of CFC-113 to California meth labs.

The investigation revealed that a company called All Discount Lab Supplies was selling CFC-113 to individuals who used the product in meth labs, and the principals of All Discount Labs have since pleaded guilty to selling CFC-113 with reasonable cause to believe it was being used for the illegal manufacture of methamphetamine.

Although Shellef and Rubenstein were not indicted on drug charges, the investigation revealed that they were major suppliers of CFC-113 to All Discount Labs. When used in meth labs, the CFC-113 is released directly into the atmosphere where it damages the ozone layer.

The defendants each face maximum sentences of 25 years in prison and \$500,000 in fines for the conspiracy and wire fraud convictions.

In addition, Shellef faces a maximum sentence of 20 years on the money laundering convictions and a fine of \$500,000 or twice the property involved in the offenses. The false corporate tax return charges each carry maximum sentences of three years and fines of \$250,000, and the personal income tax evasion charge carries a maximum sentence of five years and a fine of \$250,000.

Shellef also faces forfeiture of over \$1 million of funds involved in the money laundering offenses.

Source: Environment News Service <http://www.ens-newswire.com/>

EUROPE

6- Replace Your Chlorinated Solvents!

The market leader in France in the development and manufacture of high technology solvents, MMCC is launching on the market an immediate substitute for HCFC 141 B and trichloroethylene. BIOSANE T 225 is an azeotrope suitable for cold, hot and vapour phase degreasing operations in existing installations.

At the present time, no other solvent is closer to trichloro-1,1,1-ethane, which is now banned because of its effect on the ozone layer. Many manufacturers have replaced this solvent with HCFC 141 B (targeted by regulation CE 2037-2000 of the European Parliament, it is banned from use as from 1 January 2002) or with trichloroethylene (which has just been classified as R45, carcinogenic and mutagenic).

BIOSANE T 225 is therefore a universal answer to a multitude of technical problems which manufacturers are suddenly faced with:

- solvent with no flash point,
- evaporation rate of 48 seconds,
- degreasing performance better than trichloro-1,1,1-ethane,
- azeotrope with a boiling point of 70°C, suitable for all machines,
- does not require labelling with regard to transport or use,
- ODP: 0.000,
- GWP: 0.000,
- PCOP: 0.

MMCC has always been in advance of changes in regulations concerning protection of the environment (protection of the ozone layer, reduction in emissions of solvents with a greenhouse effect) and the workplace (risks linked with flammability of products, toxicity).

Further information at MMCC website: www.mmcc.fr

Source: InoTech France, <http://www.infotechfrance.com/london/>

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