



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Temple-Inland to commence limited discharge tomorrow; DEQ to conduct dye tests in Pearl River

DHH tests show that tested private domestic water wells meet safe drinking water standards

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality has approved Temple-Inland’s request to commence a limited wastewater discharge plan from its water treatment system. This limited discharge is necessary in order to prevent an emergency discharge in the event of a storm or unforeseen weather event. This is slated to begin Friday, Aug. 26, and will be a 12-hour discharge. The discharge will be less than 1/10 of the normal discharge from the plant. DEQ still continues to closely monitor the facility and take water samples to ensure that the facility's discharge will be protective of the environment and that the receiving stream continues to display signs of normal environmental activity.

Temple-Inland will not be starting up production or process operations at the facility. However, DEQ has received Temple-Inland’s proposed plan to re-start the facility. DEQ will be working on Friday with local, state and federal officials to gather comments and ensure the plan is protective of the environment. If the plan is acceptable and meets environmental regulations, the facility may be able to start production as early as Monday.

Washington Parish President Richard Thomas said that he “appreciates the assistance of all agencies involved as moving toward the reopening of the Bogalusa Mill is vital to Washington Parish and the surrounding area.”

"Given the information St. Tammany Parish has received from DEQ and other state agencies, we understand the need for the limited discharge," said St. Tammany Parish President Kevin Davis.

The Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals has been testing drinking water in the area since the discharge and fish kill that closed the plant. Most recently, DHH conducted tests paid for by Temple-Inland on 18 privately owned domestic water wells located near the Pearl River. Results showed that water from these wells is safe to drink under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s safe drinking water standards. Earlier, DHH had tested public water drinking systems and found the drinking water safe as well. DHH will continue to monitor drinking water in the area.

As part of the current wastewater discharge plan, DEQ has required additional and more frequent monitoring by the facility. This includes the installation of electronic monitoring equipment, in conjunction with DEQ’s confirmatory water sampling effort on Pearl River in Washington and St. Tammany Parishes. DEQ will also have staff on the river monitoring water quality throughout the weekend, as it has done since the initial release.

With respect to Temple-Inland’s discharge, the confirmatory sampling effort is being conducted to gather water quality information that will be used to determine flow rates and water quality in the River. This information can be used to develop potential additional permit restrictions that will provide additional protection of the water body. Data gathered from the sampling effort will be used to identify pollutants in the water body that may cause or contribute to low oxygen levels in the water.

Citizens are asked not to tamper with the equipment that will be mounted on rebar, fence posts, white PVC poles or buoys. During the sampling effort, a bright red, non-toxic dye will be injected into the water in order to track the discharge in the Pearl River and determine flow and distribution patterns of the water body. One DEQ crew will monitor the discharge inside the facility and four DEQ crews will monitor the discharge in the river. If the monitoring indicates an adverse impact to the water quality in the river the discharge will be terminated. Citizens who notice the red coloration of the water should not be alarmed.

The purpose of the discharge is to reduce the level of waste water in the aerated stabilization basin to allow for rainfall and cooling water for equipment at the plant and thereby prevent an uncontrolled discharge from the basin. The discharge also provides an opportunity for LDEQ to conduct additional monitoring of the discharge.

“In light of our continual oversight of the facility, we have determined that a conscientious effort has been made by Temple-Inland to ensure that precautions have been met and environmental conditions are appropriate to approve the facility’s request to begin a monitored, limited discharge into the Pearl River,” said Peggy Hatch, DEQ Secretary. “During this limited discharge, DEQ environmental scientists will continue to closely monitor the facility while also continuing to sample the waterway to ensure that any discharge meets or exceeds state and federal environmental requirements.”

As noted in an earlier press release, as part of the approved plan, Temple-Inland is required to conduct rigorous internal sampling of its water treatment facility, of its discharge point, at various locations both upstream and downstream within the Pearl River. The approved plan also requires Temple-Inland to meet additional requirements which include providing verbal and electronic notifications to various regulatory agencies and local officials. The company must also submit weekly progress reports on the status of the events associated with their operations.