NWCAA draft permit focuses on potential air releases from proposed Shell crude-oil rail terminal

Agency sets public comment period and hearing

The Northwest Clean Air Agency invites the public to comment on its draft construction permit for the Shell Puget Sound Refinery proposed crude-oil rail unloading terminal.

Public comment period: Sept. 16 to Oct. 16, 2014, by the close of the public hearing. See below about where to send comments.

Public hearing: 6 p.m., Oct. 16, 2014, at the Anacortes Public Library, 1220 10th St., Anacortes. NWCAA will close the hearing after the last person present speaks, or 9 p.m., whichever comes first.

NWCAA’s draft permit focuses on emissions from operation of the rail terminal, and evaluates how the addition of the terminal and different types of crude oil could affect emissions at the refinery.

“While we have no authority to address the safety of trains transporting crude oil, public concern about train safety has increased interest in our permits and our work,” said NWCAA Executive Director Mark Asmundson. “We have an opportunity to show people who we are and what we do, and talk about the importance of fair, consistent, and effective permitting.”

Permit highlights

This permit takes into account the composition of the crude oil the refinery would receive at the terminal to determine emissions and permit limits.

The proposed project would allow the Shell refinery to unload light crude oil, such as Bakken crude, from railcars. It would have the capacity to unload 102 cars a day.

With this project, the refinery could receive up to 40 percent of its crude oil at the rail terminal, replacing oil delivered by ship, but not increasing the total amount of crude oil it processes.

To control emissions at the rail terminal, the permit would require the refinery to use a closed vapor control system for unloading the trains, and install specialized equipment in its onsite wastewater collection system.

Potential emissions from the project include:

- **Volatile organic compounds (ozone precursors)** could total 0.9 tons a year. Potential sources of VOCs would be leaks from unloading equipment such as pumps, valves, and flanges, and leaks from oily wastewater systems.

- **Greenhouse gases** – None directly from the operation of the terminal. There are no new stationary combustion units associated with the project and the crude oil that would be delivered to the terminal contains very little methane. The agency is not allowed to consider mobile sources such as train locomotives.

Comments and timing

After the public hearing, NWCAA will review comments and make any necessary changes. If NWCAA makes substantial revisions as a result of the comments received, the agency may issue the draft permit for a second public comment period.
Update on Shell’s air operating permit renewal

NWCAA has responded to the more than 50 comments it received on Shell’s draft air operating permit renewal. The agency’s responses might be useful to people interested in the agency’s role in permitting and the laws and rules under which the agency operates.

The responses are included in the package of documents NWCAA has submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for review. NWCAA submitted the documents to EPA on Sept. 11, 2014. EPA has 45 days to review the proposed air operating permit renewal.

Public comments and the agency’s responses are in Appendix C of a document called the statement of basis, starting on page 105. The proposed air operating permit, statement of basis, and a recording of the April 30, 2014, public hearing, are online at www.nwcleanair.org/aqPrograms/airPermits_pg2.htm, under the listing for Shell Puget Sound Refinery.

More information:
• Read the draft construction permit online: www.nwcleanair.org/publicNotices/publicNotices.htm
• Air operating permit facilities: www.nwcleanair.org/aq Programs/airPermits_pg2.htm
• Social media: www.facebook.com/nwcleanair and https://twitter.com/NWCleanAir

Media contact:

Katie Skipper, Northwest Clean Air Agency Communications Program Manager, office: 360-428-1617 ext. 235, mobile: 360-319-0739, kskipper@nwcleanair.org

Jeff Gabert, Shell Puget Sound Refinery Communications and Social Performance Manager, 360-293-1552, jeff.gabert@shell.com

The Northwest Clean Air Agency is responsible for enforcing federal, state, and local air quality regulations in Island, Skagit, and Whatcom counties. In addition to permitting and regulating industrial sources of air pollution, the agency offers information and services related to asbestos, climate change, indoor air quality, outdoor burning, woodstoves, and fireplaces. More information about the agency is available at www.nwcleanair.org,