

# Conservation Committee Report

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Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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## Department of Health Reports First West Nile Virus Human Case of 2014

Pennsylvanians Reminded to Take Steps to Avoid Infection

The departments of Health and Environmental Protection strongly recommend that all residents minimize their exposure to mosquitoes.

toes are prevalent," Secretary of Health Michael Wolf said. "There are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your loved ones from mosquito-related diseases."

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Pennsylvania's first probable human case of West Nile Virus (WNV) infection in 2014 has been detected. A Philadelphia County man was hospitalized due to WNV. He has since recovered.

"Detecting the first human case serves as a great reminder for Pennsylvanians to take the proper precautions when they are outside or near areas where mosqui-

### The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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## DEP Reminds Citizens of Important Autumn Advisories

Owners of Swimming Pools and Home Heating Oil Tanks Should Take Caution

Autumn is less than a month away and DEP would like to remind citizens

about important precautions to take as they are closing their pools and filling their home heating oil tanks. Pool wastewater, if not disposed of properly, can contaminate local waterways, while poorly maintained home heating oil tanks can leak.

When chlorinated water is drained from a swimming pool into a storm sewer, it can quickly make its way to a stream or other body of water, where aquatic life can be damaged or killed.

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## Department of Health Reports First West Nile Virus Human Case of 2014 (continued)

Although mosquitoes can bite at any time of day or night, they are most active at dawn and dusk. When outdoors, people can avoid mosquito bites by properly and consistently using DEET-containing insect repellants and covering exposed skin with lightweight clothing. To keep mosquitoes from entering a home, make sure window and door screens are in place and are in good condition.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) conducts regular surveillance and control to manage mosquito populations around the state. So far, DEP has detected WNV-infected mosquitoes in 32 counties. However, it is likely that WNV is present in other areas as well.

“As always, we encourage Pennsylvanians to take caution and reduce their risk for mosquito bites,” DEP Secretary E. Christopher Abruzzo said. “Using a personal insect repellant or staying indoors during dawn and dusk will help prevent exposure to mosquitoes.”

The mosquitoes that transmit WNV breed in areas with standing and stagnant water. These areas can include urban catch basins, clogged gutters, discarded tires, poorly maintained swimming pools, flower pots and other types of plastic containers.

Simple steps to eliminate standing water around the home include:

Remove tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots, discarded tires or any object that could collect standing water. Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers left outdoors.

Have roof gutters cleaned every year, particularly if the leaves from nearby trees have a tendency to clog the drains.

Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.

Do not let water stagnate in birdbaths.

Aerate ornamental pools, or stock them with fish.

Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, and remove standing water from pool covers.

Use landscaping to eliminate standing water that collects on your property.

Treat standing water that cannot be eliminated with Bti products which are sold at outdoor supply, home improvement and other stores. Bti is a natural product that kills mosquito larvae, but is safe for people, pets, aquatic life and plants.

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## **Department of Health Reports First West Nile Virus Human Case of 2014** (continued)

DEP will continue to survey affected communities to monitor WNV. When necessary, DEP will conduct larval and adult control activities to reduce the risk to human health. These efforts will continue through fall.

For a fact sheet on WNV, including symptoms, please visit the Department of Health's webpage, [www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us), and click on "West Nile Virus Fact Sheet" under "What's Hot."

For more information, including current test results for mosquitoes, birds and horses, visit [www.westnile.state.pa.us](http://www.westnile.state.pa.us) and click on the Pennsylvania map for WNV data tables, or call 877-PA HEALTH.

Source: PA Dept. of Health

## **DEP Reminds Citizens of Important Autumn Advisories (continued)**

The discharge of swimming pool water to local waterways without a permit is a violation of the Clean Streams Law. Property owners and pool companies must obtain a permit from their local municipality before disposing of any pool wastewater. This includes pool backwash water, neutralized pool cleaning wastewater and standing water.

Pool wastewater should be discharged into the local sanitary sewer system, if possible. If sanitary sewers are not available, the wastewater should be hauled off-site for disposal at an approved treatment facility or otherwise discharged according to the department's Swimming Pool Wastewater Discharge Guidelines.

Owners of home heating oil tanks should consider inspecting indoor and outdoor home heating oil tanks for potential problems prior to refilling them. Preventing leaks will save owners energy and money, in addition to protecting owners' health.

Leaking heating oil can cause indoor air problems and potentially contaminate groundwater and private drinking water wells. A spill cleanup can cost up to \$50,000 and may not be covered by homeowner's insurance. Residents who think their oil tank may have a problem should immediately contact their oil company for help.

A quarter of all Pennsylvania homes use heating oil to stay warm in the winter.

DEP encourages homeowners to consider these tips:

- For safety reasons, always assume the tank contains at least some oil;
- Routinely inspect the exterior of the tank and all attached equipment;
- Check for signs of rusting on the tank and its structural supports;
- Examine the tank's fill line and feed line to the furnace for leaks;
- Never tip over or empty a tank onto the ground;
- Enlist a professional to perform maintenance or alterations to a heating oil tank system; and
- Recognize that wet spots or odors near the tank may signal a problem.

When fuel is delivered, make certain that the home address is clearly visible and the tank's fill line clearly marked. If a resident cannot be home when fuel oil is delivered, mark the fill pipe with a red flag or marker and inform the oil company of the location. Ensure that any disconnected fill pipes that remain above the ground are permanently sealed and cannot be opened.

For more information, or to view the Swimming Pool Wastewater Guidelines, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) keyword: pool wastewater.

For more information about filling a home heating oil tank, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) keyword: Storage Tanks, or call DEP's Division of Storage Tanks at 717-772-5599.

Source: PA DEP

## DEP Celebrates Opening of Pittsburgh Botanical Garden



On Aug. 1, DEP Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mine Operations John Stefanko (center) accompanied U.S. Secretary of the Department of the Interior Sally Jewel (far right) on a tour of the Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens.

Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mine Operations John Stefanko along with Bureau Director of Abandoned Mine Reclamation Eric Cavazza participated in the opening of the Pittsburgh Botanical Garden in Oakdale, which sits atop abandoned coal mines.

Also present at the opening ceremony was U.S. Secretary of the Department of the Interior Sally Jewel and Director of the Federal Office of Surface Mining Joe Pizarchik.

Part of the Pittsburgh Botanical Gardens is a re-mining site that will reclaim a former strip mining area as part of mining operations. The botanical garden stretches across 460 acres and includes plans for 18 themed gardens, five types of woodlands and a botanic research facility while a quarter of the garden area still has active mining occurring. The garden works by filtering acid mine drainage into the ground which then flows through a 5-foot-deep limestone water treatment facility into a lotus pond.

Funding for the treatment facility was provided by a DEP Growing Greener grant.

Source: PA. DEP

## **Thousand Cankers Disease Detected in SE PA Trees**

Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties were quarantined this week due to the detection of Thousand Cankers Disease in trees. This restricts the movement of wood and wood products from these counties. PDA is working with other state and federal agencies and Penn State to slow the spread of Thousand Cankers, which currently has no known cure.

Source: PA Department of Agriculture

# EPA Releases Three Final Chemical Risk Assessments

Agency identifies health concern from chemical used in paint strippers

EPA released three final risk assessments for specific uses of three chemicals found in common household products. The risk assessment for Dichloromethane (DCM), which is widely used in paint stripping products, indicates health risks to both workers and consumers who use these products, and to bystanders in workplaces and residences where DCM is used. EPA estimates that more than 230,000 workers nationwide are directly exposed to DCM from DCM-containing paint strippers.

“While EPA continues to support much needed reform of this country’s chemicals management legislation, we are also using our current authorities as effectively as we can, which includes conducting risk assessments on chemicals to determine if they are safe for the public,” said Jim Jones, Assistant Administrator for EPA’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention. “Our review indicates that the use of DCM in paint strippers pose risks to human health, so EPA is beginning an effort to determine options for addressing the concern.”

Risk assessments for the other two chemicals did not show concerns. The other two looked at ecological risks of antimony trioxide (ATO) used as a synergist in halogenated flame retardants and 1,3,4,6,7,8-Hexahydro-4,6,6,7,8,8,-hexamethylcyclopenta-[γ]-2-benzopyran (HHCB) used as a fragrance ingredient in commercial and consumer products.

These final assessments and the recently released TCE risk assessment, which identified concerns for certain uses, were developed as part of the agency’s Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Work Plan, which identified chemicals for review and assessment of potential risks to people’s health and the environment. The risk assessments are based on the best available information and were finalized after careful consideration of comments from the public and experts during an independent, scientific peer review of the assessments.

For DCM, EPA is considering a range of possible voluntary and regulatory actions to address concerns and anticipates conducting a workshop in late fall to engage key stakeholders and the public on potential alternatives and risk reduction approaches.

In the meantime, EPA recommends that consumers check the label to determine if the product contains Dichloromethane or Methylene Chloride. If so, EPA recommends taking precautions that can reduce exposures, such as using the product outside or in an extremely well-ventilated area and wearing protective equipment.

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## **EPA Releases Three Final Chemical Risk Assessments (continued)**

EPA is also currently evaluating risks of another chemical in paint strippers called N-Methylpyrrolidone (NMP). EPA released a draft risk assessment for NMP which identified risks associated with use of NMP-containing paint strippers. EPA does not expect the final risk assessment to significantly change this conclusion, and therefore recommends that those using NMP-containing paint strippers also take measures to minimize exposure.

Additional information on these final risk assessments and other TSCA Work Plan chemicals can be found at: <http://www.epa.gov/oppt/existingchemicals/pubs/riskassess.html>

Source: US EPA

## **ExxonMobil Pipeline Company to Pay Civil Penalty Under Proposed Settlement for Torbert, Louisiana Oil Spill**

### ***Settlement Resolves Clean Water Act Violation Stemming from 2012 Spill***

ExxonMobil Pipeline Company (ExxonMobil) has agreed to pay a civil penalty for an alleged violation of the Clean Water Act stemming from a 2012 crude oil spill from ExxonMobil's "North Line" pipeline near Torbert, Louisiana, the Department of Justice and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today. Under the consent decree lodged today in federal court, ExxonMobil will pay \$1,437,120 to resolve the government's claim.

The United States' complaint, which was also filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana, alleges that ExxonMobil discharged at least 2,800 barrels (or 117,000 gallons) of crude oil in violation of Section 311 of the Clean Water Act. On April 28, 2012, ExxonMobil's 20/22-inch-diameter pipeline ruptured near Torbert, about 20 miles west of Baton Rouge, and crude oil spilled into the surrounding area and flowed into an unnamed tributary connected to Bayou Cholpe.

"All businesses have an obligation to protect their workers, the local community and the environment in which they operate," said Cynthia Giles, Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance at EPA. "EPA is committed to protecting communities by enforcing laws that reduce pollution in local waterways."

"Oil spills into our nation's waters endanger public health and the environment and warrant concerted enforcement efforts," said Sam Hirsch, Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "Today's settlement achieves a just result and furthers our enforcement mission."

The \$1.4 million penalty is in addition to the costs incurred by ExxonMobil to respond to the oil spill and to replace the segment of ruptured pipeline. ExxonMobil is completing cleanup actions pursuant to an administrative order issued by the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. The company also continues to do follow-up work and to operate under a Corrective Action Order issued by the United States Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.

The Clean Water Act makes it unlawful to discharge oil or hazardous substances into or upon the navigable waters of the United States or adjoining shorelines in quantities that may be harmful to the environment or public health. The penalty paid for this spill will be deposited in the federal Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund managed by the National Pollution Fund Center. The Oil Spill Liability Trust Fund is used to pay for federal response activities and to compensate for damages when there is a discharge or substantial threat of discharge of oil or hazardous substances to waters of the United States or adjoining shorelines.

The proposed consent decree, lodged in the Middle District of Louisiana, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and court review and approval. A copy of the consent decree is available on the Department of Justice website at [www.justice.gov/enrd/Consent\\_Decrees.html](http://www.justice.gov/enrd/Consent_Decrees.html).

Source: US EPA

# US settles with Costco to cut ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas refrigerant

Costco Wholesale Corporation, the nation's second largest retailer, has agreed to cut its emissions of ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas chemicals from refrigeration equipment at more than half of its stores nationwide.

In the settlement announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Justice (DOJ), Costco will pay \$335,000 in penalties for federal Clean Air Act violations and improve refrigerant management at 274 stores at an estimated cost of \$2 million over the next three years.

"Cutting harmful greenhouse gas emissions is a national priority for EPA, and this settlement will lead to significant reductions of an ozone-depleting gas that is 1,700 times more potent than carbon dioxide," said Cynthia Giles, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. "Fixing leaks of refrigerants, improving compliance and reducing emissions will make a real difference in protecting us from the dangers of ozone depletion, while reducing the impact on climate change."

"Compliance with the nation's Clean Air Act is key to protecting all Americans from air pollution that damages our atmosphere and changes our climate," said Sam Hirsch, acting assistant attorney general for the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division. "Industry needs to lead the way in abandoning harmful chemicals in favor of using and developing greener, environmentally friendly alternatives to protect our health and our climate."

Costco violated the federal Clean Air Act by failing to repair leaks of the refrigerant R-22, a hydrochlorofluorocarbon and a powerful ozone-depleting substance, between 2004 and 2007. Costco also failed to keep adequate records of the servicing of its refrigeration equipment, required by the Clean Air Act to prevent harmful leaks.

Under the settlement, Costco will implement a refrigerant management system to prevent and repair coolant leaks and reduce its corporate-wide average leak rate by one-fifth (from 24 percent in 2011 to 19 percent or less by 2017). Costco will install and operate environmentally friendly glycol secondary loop refrigeration systems and centrally monitored refrigerant leak detection systems at all new stores for three years. As required by the settlement, Costco will retrofit commercial refrigeration equipment at 30 stores, reducing ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas emissions.

The measures required of Costco by the settlement are expected to prevent more than 105,000 pounds of future releases of ozone-depleting refrigerants that destroy the ozone layer. Destroying the ozone layer results in dangerous amounts of cancer-causing ultraviolet solar radiation striking the earth, increasing skin cancers and cataracts.

R-22 is also a potent greenhouse gas with 1,700 times more global warming potential than carbon dioxide or CO<sub>2</sub>. The measures required by the settlement are expected to reduce Cost-

## US settles with Costco to cut ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas refrigerant (continued)

co's greenhouse gas emissions by the equivalent of approximately 30,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year.

The settlement is part of EPA's national enforcement initiative to control harmful air pollution from the largest sources of emissions, including large grocery stores.

Clean Air Act Title VI requires owners or operators of commercial refrigeration equipment with over 50 pounds of ozone-depleting refrigerants, and with an annual leak rate greater than 35 percent, to repair all leaks within 30 days.

Corporate commitments to reduce emissions from refrigeration systems have been increasing in recent years. EPA's GreenChill Partnership Program works with food retailers to reduce refrigerant emissions and decrease their impact on the ozone layer and climate change by transitioning to environmentally friendlier refrigerants, using less refrigerant and eliminating leaks, and adopting green refrigeration technologies and best environmental practices.

Costco, headquartered in Issaquah, Wash., operates 466 stores in 43 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, and additional stores worldwide, with revenues of \$105.2 billion in 2013. The settlement covers 274 Costco stores that have commercial refrigeration equipment regulated by the Clean Air Act.

The proposed settlement is subject to a 30-day public comment period and final court approval.

Read the proposed settlement at: <http://www2.epa.gov/enforcement/costco-wholesale-corporation-clean-air-act-settlement>

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)