

The AN Group

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 8, 2011) – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Draft IRIS Assessment on Acrylonitrile is Incomplete and Lacks Scientific Objectivity

The recently released draft IRIS review of acrylonitrile by EPA lacks scientific rigor and objectivity, according to an initial review by the Acrylonitrile Group¹ (“AN Group”).

Acrylonitrile is a data rich chemical that has undergone extensive testing and reviews by prominent experts, as well as independent international and US peer-review panels. EPA completely ignores many of the technical articles published in highly reputable peer review journals, most notably those that present opposing views. For example, the draft assessment fails to even mention the last review of acrylonitrile by the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the published independent technical review by Toxicology Excellence for Risk Assessment (TERA) and the review conducted by the State of North Carolina Scientific Advisory Board on Air Toxics. The failure to consider published articles that espouse conclusions differing from EPA’s, does not represent the type of objective, transparent, comprehensive scientific review expected of the current EPA.

Essentially all of the contemporary expert scientific reviews of acrylonitrile epidemiology (human) studies have concluded that there is not an association between real world exposure to AN and cancer. For example, in its most recent review of AN published in 1999, IARC downgraded AN from carcinogen Category 2A (“probable”) to Category 2B (“possible”) based on the lack of an association between AN exposure and cancer in workers. In contrast to the findings of IARC and others, the draft 2011 IRIS assessment concludes that acrylonitrile is “likely to be carcinogenic to humans” without any discussion or even acknowledgment of these other published reviews.

With regards to non-cancer, the EPA assessment relies on a largely subjective neurobehavioral study (citing effects such as anger, confusion, and tension) conducted in China where there is a lack of reliable exposure information. Respected scientists in this field have cautioned about the limitations of this type of data for quantitative risk

¹ The AN Group is a not-for-profit trade association, which represents the North American producers of acrylonitrile and some of the major processors/users.

assessment. The document fails to discuss the limitations of this type of data, which are presented in the published literature. Use of this “novel” approach by EPA, when numerous valid end-point data are available, is also quite disturbing.

Due to the complexity of the AN IRIS assessment combined with the numerous concerns already identified -- many of which are similar to those highlighted in the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) recent review of the draft Formaldehyde IRIS Assessment -- the AN Group will be requesting that EPA: 1) withdraw the IRIS assessment until a complete review can be provided that discusses the range of views in the published literature; and, 2) send the updated, more comprehensive assessment to an independent peer review organization, such as NAS, so that the necessary expertise and time is provided for a comprehensive review.