

Harris County
HCPHES
Public Health & Environmental Services

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**Sophisticated Air Monitoring Station Anchors
New HCPHES Air Monitoring Initiative**

Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES) will launch a state-of-the-art ambient air monitoring station (AAMS) as part of its new air monitoring initiative at 9:00 a.m. on August 23rd at 901 Curtis Boulevard in Pasadena. At that time, HCPHES staff will brief local officials on the function and capability of the AAMS as well as HCPHES' new Fence Line and Neighborhood Ambient Chemicals Sampling Plan.

State-of-the-Art Air Monitoring Station

The innovative Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) technology is the anchor of the new AAMS. Not only does the AAMS fill a gap in the HCPHES ozone monitor network, it detects and measures highly reactive Volatile Organic Compounds (HRVOCs) such as propylene and 1,3-butadiene, in addition to other chemical compounds such as benzene. It is also the only technology commercially available that is able to detect and measure over 100 of the 189 Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAPs) listed in the Clean Air Act. (HAPs are chemicals that are known or suspected to cause cancer.) Additionally, FTIR measurements can be read almost immediately, an improvement on previous methods which could take as long as an hour.

Dr. Herminia Palacio, Executive Director of HCPHES, said, "We are excited about the capabilities that the FTIR adds to our air monitoring efforts. The station's ability to collect continuous air samples will help us in identifying what is in the air that our Pasadena residents are breathing."

Fence Line & Neighborhood Ambient Chemicals Sampling Program

Another phase of the initiative is the launch of a new HCPHES Air Chemicals Sampling Program. This program, which is not limited to the Pasadena area, focuses on the worst HAPs and involves collecting and analyzing air samples. The samples will be collected from the

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property/fence line of various petrochemical facilities as well as neighborhoods that are next to certain industrial facilities that release these HAPs. The air samples will be analyzed for specific HAPs as well as HRVOCs. The results will be compared to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality's Effects Screening Levels for these HAPs. (Effects Screening Levels are used to evaluate for potential adverse health effects, nuisance odors, effects on vegetation, and corrosive effects.)

“The Fence Line and Neighborhood Chemicals Sampling program was established to assist us in developing an evidence-based toxins control strategy,” explained Dr. Palacio. “This, along with other initiatives regarding environmental toxins control, will strengthen HCPHES’ efforts to identify and address the health impact of the environmental pollutants in Harris County.”

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