

Ethylene Oxide Media Statement – March 27, 2019

Ethylene Oxide (EO) is a critical sterilant for medical supplies -- it is the only sterilization method that is fully compatible with a wide variety of components. More than 50 percent of all medical supplies are sterilized with EO, and virtually all sterile surgical packs require EO sterilization because of the broad range of materials within them. EO is currently used in over 40 countries for sterilization purposes.

Our facility in Waukegan produces and sterilizes more than 16,000 sterile surgical packs per day used by a majority of hospitals in Illinois. These critical medical devices contain all of the disposable items necessary during in-patient and out-patient procedures – from tonsillectomies, C-sections, joint replacements to organ transplants and open heart surgeries.

We are proactively working to install best-available abatement technology that will control all sources of emissions and will increase the efficiency of current controls to the highest level possible. Medline's current emission controls operate at over 99% efficiency, exceeding all state and federal requirements.

Medline agrees with the EPA's statement that more scientific study analysis is needed to determine actual point of risk of EO emissions. We must determine what level of emissions is safe for the public health – our communities, employees and patients deserve nothing less. EO has been used safely at low levels for decades. Recently, an EPA report suggested exposure limits far lower than existing OSHA limits, but even lower than what's produced by the human body or what recent EPA monitoring has found in locations that have no apparent source of EO.

Thirteen other scientific studies show no causal link to cancer in humans at the traditional exposure limits that were in use prior to 1990. These levels were higher than the OSHA permissible exposure limit (1 ppm) in use today. Scientific study and analysis can help pinpoint the appropriate next steps. Medline is taking action until the community knows more.

We are committed to using the best available technology to control 100% of the sources of emissions within our facility, and are dedicated to studying the latest scientific research and investing in new technology to deliver our life-saving medical devices in a way that continues to be safe for our community and our employees.