

## 3M wants to burn outside waste in its incinerator

Jon Advise

*South Washington County Bulletin*

April 08, 2009

3M Co. officials on Thursday hosted an informational open house intended to bring the public up to speed on its plans to begin burning non-3M wastes in the company's large-scale industrial incinerator at its 3M-Cottage Grove site. The plan, currently under review by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, would not change what or how much 3M's Cottage Grove incinerator is allowed to burn. Rather, it would alter language in the facility's permit to allow the company to accept outside wastes with fuel value — as well as things like seized illegal narcotics from various law enforcement agencies — in a move that 3M officials hope would save the company nearly \$1 million per year. 3M would accept the solvents and waste material free of charge, said spokesman Bill Nelson. He said Thursday 3M's intention is to maintain the incinerator's necessary temperature without using fuel oil or natural gas.

As the amount of liquid solvent waste has decreased in recent years, 3M has been forced to use an increasing amount of other fuels. By accepting outside waste, Nelson says, 3M estimates it could save roughly \$750,000 per year. "3M as a company (is) looking at every possible way to save money and also preserve jobs," he said. "3M isn't looking to get into the business of processing waste." The proposal, he said, is simply to find alternative liquid solvent material to be used as a fuel source for the incinerator as a cost-saving measure. But while 3M officials at Thursday's open house stressed the plan, if approved by the pollution control agency, would not increase the volume of waste incinerated or air pollution emitted, some residents were uncertain of the effects on Cottage Grove.

The city of Cottage Grove has no hand in the decision-making process, city and pollution control agency officials said; the state pollution control agency will determine whether 3M can go ahead with the proposed fuel source changes. City council member Mark Grossklaus, along with Mayor Myron Bailey, represented the Cottage Grove City Council at the informational session. Grossklaus said he sensed worry from some residents about the possibility of revised incinerator permits. "I think people are just concerned about what's next," Grossklaus said. "Now they bring in the solvents. But if they run out of those, then what do they bring in? That's what I'm hearing." Cottage Grove farmer Leroy Pribnow, 68, said he was unsure whether he should be concerned about the plan. Pribnow said he grew up in northern Cottage Grove, near the Woodbury disposal site now contaminated with 3M-manufactured chemicals that have seeped into south Washington County groundwater. "I was a kid when I saw them dumping (waste) up there," he said. "It was supposed to be safe."

There's probably little residents can do to stop the state from giving the OK to 3M to begin accepting outside waste, Pribnow said. "You'd be a dummy if you don't have concerns," he said, "but if the state of Minnesota approves it, what difference are we going to make?" Pollution control officials said guidelines laid out in the company's current permit would not be violated under the proposed change.

The plan is "not changing what they're allowed to take" just where 3M can get it, said Greg Kvaal, a senior engineer with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Next, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will put the amendment on public notice April 15, giving the public an opportunity to comment on 3M's proposed changes.