

AMERICAN SMELTING AND REFINING COMPANY

Tacoma, Washington

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Tacoma 383-2711

SULFUR DIOXIDE FROM TACOMA SMELTER NOT HARMFUL TO PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY,
ENVIRONMENTAL EXPERT TESTIFIES

TACOMA--A professor of environmental medicine and toxicology at the University of California School of Medicine at San Francisco, Dr. Charles H. Hine, emphatically said today at the Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency meeting in Tacoma that the granting of the variance sought by the American Smelting and Refining Company would not endanger public health and safety.

The control agency meetings are being conducted to determine before the agency rules on a request from the Tacoma smelter for a variance while it constructs an 1,100-foot chimney at its plant in nearby Ruston.

Dr. Hine, who has conducted extensive research on the toxicity of various gases, stated flatly that meteorological and climatic conditions are so different in various geographic areas of the United States that there is no basis on which comparisons can be made with other problem areas.

"Therefore," said Dr. Hine, "there is no correlation between community sulfur dioxide levels of and by themselves and illnesses or increases of respiratory diseases." (more)

He explained that past studies which have been carried out suggesting an association were made in areas of population where coal and heating fuel were the main heating sources and the climatic conditions were cold and damp, very much unlike the Puget Sound vicinity and its climatic conditions.

He said exposure to one part of sulfur dioxide per million parts of air for more than an hour would have no adverse effects to public health and safety under conditions encountered in the Puget Sound area. The Puget Sound agency now permits a ground-level concentration of one part per million for an average time of five minutes in any single 8-hour period.

"Further," he added, "there would be no discomfort on the part of the people. The variance-permitted levels of sulfur dioxide would not adversely affect the population although slight smell or taste might be noted by some."

"I have exposed myself and others to 25 parts sulfur dioxide per million parts of air and experience no harmful effects," he stated.

Dr. Hine said that epidemiologic studies do not lend themselves to drawing conclusions to what is happening in Tacoma in comparison with what has happened in other parts of the world. Levels in most eastern cities are well above those encountered in Tacoma, he added.

Dr. Hine is a former member of the committee on toxicology of the National Research Council and an advisor to the California Medical Association's committee on environmental health. He is also a consultant to the State of California's Department of Public Health.

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