

SUMMARY

EPN Comments on the Carbon Tetrachloride Draft Risk Evaluation Under TSCA

February 19, 2020

On February 19, 2020, EPN submitted [comments](#) in response to EPA's [announcement](#) that it was seeking public input on its draft risk evaluation of the chemical carbon tetrachloride (CC14) under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The draft risk evaluation will be presented for peer review at the February 25-26 in-person meeting of the TSCA Science Advisory Committee on Chemicals. CC14 was once widely used in dry cleaning, manufacturing refrigerants and aerosol propellants, and fire extinguishers, but its use has been phased out except in some industrial applications because of health and safety concerns. Exposure to high concentrations can affect the central nervous system and impact the liver and kidneys; prolonged exposure can be fatal. It is the seventh of the first ten chemicals undergoing EPA risk evaluations under TSCA.

EPN's comments on the draft risk evaluation raised several key issues about the evaluation of CC14:

- **Consistent with a Court of Appeals ruling, historical or “legacy” uses and associated legacy disposal of CC14 should NOT be excluded in defining conditions of use; they should be analyzed during risk evaluations.** EPA is obligated to revise this draft risk evaluation to incorporate the assessment of any identified legacy uses and associated legacy disposal, and then re-issue an expanded and updated assessment for further peer review and public comment.
- **EPA has not provided a sufficient explanation of its decision to remove all consumer conditions of use from the evaluation.** The rationale for this exclusion is that these uses “would present only *de minimis* exposure or otherwise insignificant risk.” However, EPA has not provided a definition or interpretation of “*de minimis*” or “insignificant risk,” and has not presented any criteria to determine if a condition of use represents *de minimis* or insignificant risk.

EPN also raised several ongoing issues about approaches taken in the CC14 and previous risk evaluations:

- **Use of a flawed TSCA systematic review process.** The currently used systematic review process—the scientific method for identifying, assessing and integrating data from multiple sources—has never been externally peer-reviewed. EPN recommends that EPA stop using the process until it has been formally peer reviewed and revised to follow accepted scientific principles.
- **EPA's failure to conduct health-protective exposure and risk assessments when evaluating potential risks from situations, such as consumer exposure, that could be regulated under other statutes.** While it may not be appropriate to use TSCA to control exposure in scenarios better covered by other statutes, it does not absolve the agency from considering them when making risk determinations under TSCA.
- **The inadequacy of the toxicity database used to assess the potential for human health hazards.**
- **EPA's approach to determining unreasonable risk to workers and others.** EPA underestimates the risk to workers by assuming they will use personal protective equipment (PPE), such as respirators, during all of their work throughout their careers, even when such equipment is not required, provided or used. EPN believes EPA should not consider the use of PPE in making unreasonable risk determinations. EPN also believes EPA should re-evaluate all conditions of use for both the worker and non-worker populations.

Background

TSCA was passed in 1976 to keep dangerous chemicals off the market and protect people from exposure to existing chemicals. It was [amended and strengthened](#) in 2016, requiring EPA to set priorities for which chemicals to assess, evaluate their risks and impose restrictions to protect people's health and the environment.