The struggle for clean air in south Durban…

by: South Durban Community Environmental Alliance

SDCEA
EVERYONE HAS A RIGHT TO AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS NOT HARMFUL TO THEIR HEALTH OR WELL-BEING.

SA’S BILL OF RIGHTS, SECTION 24A
Engen Refinery Fluidized Cat Cracker Unit
Engen Refinery on the 11/10/2006 – Fluidized Cat Cracker Unit
More suffering in South Durban...
Children of Wentworth playing in a park next to Engen Refinery
AGONY OF THE CHILDREN OF SOUTH DURBAN

NATHANAEL BEDESSY: 3, died last year from leukaemia.

LYNSEY DE BEER: 18, died of leukaemia in 1995.

SADÉ SCHWARTZ: 13, being treated for brain cancer.


JODACHE NAIDOO: 4, has stomach cancer.

TASLEEM OMAR: 3, sick with leukaemia.
AGONY OF THE CHILDREN OF SOUTH DURBAN

Children gassed by factory leak

TONY CARNIE

At least 27 people, including several schoolchildren, were taken to hospital or treated by ambulance staff yesterday afternoon after another chlorine gas leak at Umngobogumbi, South of Durban.

The chlorine leak, which was reported at 3pm away in Glenwood, emanated from the same factory responsible for the gasping of more than 100 schoolchildren in Isipingo four months ago. It also coincided with an invitation to residents of south Durban to gather at a public meeting in Merebank, Austerville and the Bluff next week to protest about the health and air pollution problems highlighted in The Mercury this week.

The latest gas leak from Saudi Polymers (formerly Polpol) happened just after noon and affected several people close to the factory as well as residents and children in Lotus Park, Isipingo, about 2.5km away.

Mr Kim Fraser, general manager of the company's chemical division, said the cause of the leak was not clear, although it seemed to have come from a loading area where chlorine cylinders are filled for water-purification purposes.

At Sretshinda Secondary School, at least four pupils - Shanthi Isaa, Romano Gwonde, Siphiwe Makanda and Pieter Abdiel - were affected, said headmaster Nanda Nair.

Osma Primary School head Anand Attanesaid several children had complained of chest pains or were upsets, and one child, 13-year-old Shabina Gada, had been in hospital.

Incident and said his company would pay for all medical costs.

Just four months ago, on May 5, nearly 120 children or teachers from Sretshinda Secondary School were affected or given medical treatment after a similar leak from the Saudi Polymers plant. The factory was closed after the May incident and only reopened a few weeks ago.

Mr Linda Anand, of the environmental justice group "groundWork", said the latest incident showed that reopening the factory had been premature and indicated that the necessary safety, health and environmental safeguards were not yet in place.

"The incident comes against a background of growing discontent in south Durban about industrial pollution, and "groundWork" is deeply concerned and disappointed at the apparent disregard shown by industries and the government for community health.

"Both the government and polluting industries need to spend more time, finances and resources on protecting the health of South Africans."

The South Durban Community Environmental Alliance has invited residents to a series of "Speak Out" protest meetings next week to demand a comprehensive health study in the area.

They will be held at 7pm at Austerville Civic Centre, Austerville Drive (Tuesday), Merebank Community Centre, Dhanwar Road (Thursday) and Brighton Beach School, 469 Marine Drive, Bluff (Friday).

For information phone Michelle Simon, project SOCEA co-ordinator, at 3661 461.
The Mondi Paper Mill in South Durban
Incidents in South Durban

On the 18th of October 2002 a fire broke out at Bresman, a Bitumen chemical factory in Jacobs resulting in an explosion where one worker died & one was injured.
SAPREF Plant on the 28/10/2006
Community workshops and reports
“When we breathe the air of freedom we do not wish to choke on hidden fumes”

Judge Albie Sachs