

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

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This latest **EXCALIBUR** bulletin presents several emerging developments and in-progress initiatives potentially significant to environmental projects regionally and nationally.



Little Fuel Spills, Potentially Substantive Impact. A Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health study published in the *Journal of Contaminant Hydrology* suggests that even small transfer spills of petroleum product during the filling of automobile fuel tanks can lead to substantive impacts to soil and groundwater over time. These transfer spills run from the gamut from the loss of a few drops of fuel to more significant overfills. On the lower end of the scale of losing just a few drops during each fueling visit, the study authors conservatively estimate that as much as 1,500 liters of motor fuel may be lost to the environment over the course of a decade at a single fuel-dispensing station. Using a mathematical model developed for the study, the authors measured the amount of gasoline that permeates through the concrete within a typical fueling island area versus the amount of gasoline that vaporizes into the air. Since the concrete is not impervious and the spilled droplets remain on the concrete surface for several minutes, the model shows that “a significant fraction of spilled gasoline droplets infiltrate into the pavement.” The study claims to show that not only do the concrete pads around the pumps accumulate significant amounts of gasoline, but that this accumulated gasoline eventually penetrates the concrete to enter the underlying soil and groundwater.

<http://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2014/small-spills-at-gas-stations-could-cause-significant-public-health-risks-over-time.html>

CERES and the National Association of Insurance Companies Survey Says Insurance Companies Are Unprepared to Address Climate Change Risks. According to a new industry survey, 83% of insurance company respondents indicate they are insufficiently prepared to address climate change-related risks. Only 38 of 330 respondents had issued public climate risk management statements that articulate their understanding of climate science and its implications for core underwriting and investment portfolios. The report also notes that annual losses from natural catastrophes have continued to increase over the past 30 years while the insured portion has declined.

<http://www.ceres.org/press/press-releases/first-of-its-kind-report-ranks-u.s.-insurance-companies-on-climate-change-responses>

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Climate Change Disclosures Seen to be a “Fiduciary Duty.” Seventy major investors and companies—among them Honda and Unilever—have pledged to report climate change information in their corporate reports as a matter of “fiduciary duty.” In a statement issued through the Climate Disclosure Standards Board (CDSB), the signatory parties claim that “financial markets do not yet take sufficient account of climate-related corporate performance, risks, and opportunities relevant to future shareholder value because of a lack of comprehensive and comparable information in ‘mainstream’ corporate reports for the investment community.” In that light, the parties pledge to report this kind of information using the Climate Change Reporting Framework developed by the CDSB or some other comparable framework that meets these objectives. <http://www.cdsb.net/fiduciarystatement/statement>

23 Chemicals Added to List for Assessment under TSCA. The U.S. EPA recently added 23 chemicals to its list of chemicals for assessment under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The chemicals include seven phthalates, two flame retardants, and bisphenol A (BPA). Placing a chemical on the TSCA Work Plan for Chemical Assessments does not mean the Agency has found the chemical to present a risk to human health or the environment. Rather, it means only that the Agency intends to consider assessing that chemical to determine its potential risks. At the same time, the Agency also removed 15 chemicals or groups of chemicals from its work plan list.

[http://op.bna.com/env.nsf/id/prio-9q6tx4/\\$File/TSCA Work Plan Chemicals 2014 Update-final.pdf](http://op.bna.com/env.nsf/id/prio-9q6tx4/$File/TSCA%20Work%20Plan%20Chemicals%202014%20Update-final.pdf)

Preparations for ISO 14001 Upgrade Next Year. The voluntary environmental management systems (EMS) standard known as ISO 14001 is to be upgraded next year. The main changes in the new draft are a greater focus on risk management and a shift towards improving environmental performance rather than the management system itself (see second web link below). Recently, a study by EEF, an organization for manufacturing companies in the United Kingdom, suggests that 90 percent of the companies surveyed do not have EMS that are completely ready to meet the upgraded standard, and 80 percent do not have sufficient top-level support for meeting the new requirements. In addition, 49 percent of the companies researched by EEF say they are investing appropriately in their environmental performance and competence, while just 11 percent claim to be maximizing the benefits of their EMS by making certain it takes into account the complete lifecycle of their product or service. The study author suggests these findings show that for many businesses having an EMS may be not much more than ticking off a to-do box that falls short of recognizing the full potential and opportunity of their EMS.

<http://www.plantengineer.org.uk/plant-engineer-news/firms-to-fall-short-on-iso-14001-upgrade-warning/65043/> and http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards/management-standards/iso14000/iso14001_revision.htm

“Dry Fracking” May be Answer to Facing Limited Water Supplies in Shale Gas Resource Areas. With 38 percent of the world’s shale gas resources in areas of extreme water stress, finding substitutes for the use of water altogether in fracturing the shale are being explored. One option being considered is called “dry fracking,” which substitutes a liquefied petroleum gas gel injected under high pressure to fracture the rock formation.

<http://www.greeleytribune.com/news/feature2/13126845-113/gel-gas-companies-operations>

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