

[Things to Do](#) [Straight Dope](#) [Subscribe](#) [Today's paper](#) [Reader Services](#) [Advertise with Us](#) [Contact](#) [Select a Site](#) [Register for free](#) | [Login](#)  
| [My Account](#) | [Logout](#)

Welcome, I

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES.com

## City, state make deal with company to remove petcoke piles on Southeast Side

BY TINA SFONDELES Staff Reporter December 18, 2013 11:22PM

Updated: December 19, 2013 2:16PM

Mayor Emanuel and Attorney General Lisa Madigan on Thursday will announce an agreement with Beemsterboer Slag Co. — owners of one of three petcoke storage sites on the Southeast Side — that will force the company to remove petcoke and metcoke that neighbors say have coated their homes with black dust.

Also on Thursday, Emanuel will announce new city Department of Public Health draft regulations for petroleum coke storage companies — as well as other bulk storage facilities in the city — requiring large facilities to completely enclose their materials. Typically petcoke piles have been partially enclosed or fully exposed.

“Just as we fought to shutter the two remaining coal power plants in the city of Chicago, we are working to force these petroleum coke facilities to either clean up or shut down,” said Mayor Emanuel in a statement. “These regulations will ensure that the facilities operate in a way that prevents the spread of petcoke into neighboring communities. While we are encouraged that our efforts are producing results, we will not rest until Chicago’s children and families are protected from the potential hazards of these materials.”

The agreed order with Beemsterboer will be filed Thursday in Cook County Circuit Court, according to attorney general’s office spokeswoman Natalie Bauer.

Madigan secured an agreement with Beemsterboer before the filing. Once filed, the company will have one week to submit a work plan to remove the materials at the 22-acre facility in the 2900 block of East 106th Street.

But the company has already been removing petcoke from its site. During a city inspection on Dec. 4, an inspector noted more than 60,000 tons of petcoke had been removed in barges and vessels.

The new agreement would require very detailed accounts of where the material is being transported, as well as specifics on how long it remained at the Chicago facility.

Large petcoke facilities would have to completely enclose their materials, while smaller ones would have to implement protective measures, like installing wind barriers or other practices to control emissions, under the city’s new drafted regulations.

The regulations would apply to petcoke and other bulk solid materials including coal, pig iron and lime.

And since Beemsterboer is removing its petcoke and metcoke, KCBX Terminals — which stores BP petcoke at two sites — will be the subject of the new regulations if adopted.

Petcoke, a byproduct of the oil refinery process that’s high in sulfur and carbon, is usually shipped overseas where it is burned as fuel. Metcoke is made by subjecting bituminous coal to extremely high temperatures to produce a harder fuel used in the iron and steel industries.

The city will accept written comments from the public until Jan. 24, and Ald. John Pope (10th) will host a public hearing on the draft regulations in mid-January.

“I think it’s rather remarkable that this is happening this fast and for the attention that this got,” said Tom Shepherd of the Southeast Environmental Task Force. For months, many in the community complained of black dust coating their homes. Shepherd said the mood

in the neighborhood remains “pretty testy.”

“The ideal result of all this would be if they pack up and go, and clean up the property that they own,” Shepherd said.

“It remains to be seen. If these regulations are as tough as we’re hearing, it’s going to be an enormous investment [to KCBX] so we’ll have to see what happens.”

In a statement, KCBX spokesman Jake Reint said the company has invested \$30 million in upgrading its bulk materials terminal, including \$10 million in a new dust-suppression system. The company is also working with the U.S. EPA to install air monitors.

Beemsterboer could not be reached for comment Thursday evening.

Email: [tsfondeles@suntimes.com](mailto:tsfondeles@suntimes.com)

Twitter: @tinasfon

---

© 2013 Sun-Times Media, LLC. All rights reserved. This material may not be copied or distributed without permission. For more information about reprints and permissions, visit [www.suntimesreprints.com](http://www.suntimesreprints.com). To order a reprint of this article, [click here](#).