

Clorox to stop using, transporting chlorine in US

By BETSY VERECKEY (AP) – 5 hours ago

CHICAGO — Household products maker The Clorox Co. said Monday it is changing how it makes its namesake bleach so it can stop transporting chlorine to U.S. factories by rail amid growing safety concerns and regulatory scrutiny.

Starting at its Fairfield, Calif., factory north of San Francisco, Clorox said it plans to switch to high-strength bleach with a higher concentration of sodium hypochlorite instead of buying chlorine and making bleach onsite.

Clorox expects to finish the transition in Fairfield in six months. Its six other factories around the United States will be changed over the following few years.

"Our goal is ultimately to eliminate the transportation of chlorine from our U.S. supply chain," spokesman Dan Staublin said.

Staublin said the company will eventually make the changes at all seven of its U.S. bleach manufacturing facilities. Clorox would not disclose how much it would cost to make the changes, which will affect the products in its namesake Clorox bleach line.

While the bleach-making process will change, the end products will not, and consumers won't notice a difference in quality, smell or color, Staublin said.

Staublin said transporting certain chemicals including chlorine, especially by rail, could get harder as regulators scrutinize the issue. Laws already bar transporting toxic materials, including substances that can vaporize, such as chlorine, through large cities.

"By transitioning to a new manufacturing process now, that allows us to stay head of regulations and potentially avoid costs," Staublin said. "With the regulatory environment we're in now, the transportation of different chemicals is being scrutinized maybe more than ever before."

Environmental watchdog Greenpeace applauded the company's decision.

"By ending the use of chlorine gas, Clorox also proves that eliminating these risks is both technically feasible and a smart business decision," said Rick Hind, Greenpeace's legislative director.

Staublin said the change also enhances security because Clorox won't be maintaining chlorine at its facilities.

Clorox shares rose 17 cents, or 0.3 percent, Monday to close at \$59.40.

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