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## State regulators move to phase out dry cleaning solvent

**The Associated Press**

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SACRAMENTO (AP) - California air regulators have voted to develop a plan to phase out a hazardous dry cleaning solvent.

Thursday's move by the state Air Resources Board could make California the first state to ban perchloroethylene, or "perc," the primary chemical used in dry cleaning.

The vote came despite protests from the industry and against the recommendation of the board's own staff.

State regulators have previously declared the chemical a toxic air and water contaminant that can cause serious health problems such as cancer.

The board directed its staff to study the economic effects of the phase-out to find ways to provide incentives for small businesses to replace their expensive dry cleaning equipment. New cleaning machinery can cost up to \$140,000.

"They made it very clear they don't want this to happen overnight, but they want to send a strong signal to dry cleaners that they should not be buying any expensive new perc equipment in the next year or two," said board spokesman Jerry Martin.

The California Cleaners Association opposed the decision, citing a 20 year study of dry cleaning employees in four European countries it says showed no increased health risks.

"California and the numbers they choose to use have regulators in the rest of the nation shaking their heads," said association spokeswoman Sandra Giarde.

In 2002, the South Coast Air Quality Management District became the first regulators in the nation to ban perchloroethylene, forcing more than 2000 Southern California cleaners to give up use of the chemical by 2020.

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