

# Rachel's Environment & Health News

## #23 - Pentagon Lists 10,000 Old Sites Requiring Superfund-Type Study

May 03, 1987

Peace activists and grass roots environmentalists have an opportunity to work together: the Department of Defense (DOD) announced March 26 that it has identified more than 10,000 potential Superfund-type sites on its properties (and former properties) around the country.

Carl Schafer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment, testified before the House Armed Services Committee, that DOD has identified 3526 potential hazardous waste sites on properties currently owned by DOD and roughly 7000 more sites on properties that DOD used to own. These potential sites are the equivalent of Superfund sites, except that the military is excluded from Superfund. The military has its own Superfund-type program called the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP). The DERP program has broad goals, including research into hazardous waste management technologies, detection and disposal of unexploded ammunition, and removal of unsafe buildings from DOD installations. Within DERP, the DOD has established the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) to deal with contaminated sites, so the IRP is the exact counterpart of Superfund. An IRP cleanup follows the same procedure as a Superfund cleanup: first, preliminary assessments/site investigations (PA/SI); then remedial investigations/feasibility studies (RI/FS); and finally remedial designs/remedial actions (RD/RA).

The Reagan Administration's budget request for the DERP program was \$377 million for 1987 and \$403 million for 1988. Mr. Schafer testified March 26 that the DERP program will require \$5 billion to \$10 billion in the next 10 years.

To request a copy of the list of 10,000 sites, you must send a Freedom of Information Act request letter to: Office of Freedom of Information and Security Review, Room 2C757, The Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301-1400. Make your request as explicit as possible; for example, you could ask for a listing of the Installation Restoration Program (IRP) sites in your state. For further information on the DERP program, contact Mr. Schafer's office at: (202) 695-7820; for a copy of Mr. Schafer's Mar. 26 testimony, contact the DOD Public Affairs office at (202) 697-5737. The number of the House Arms Service Committee is (202) 225-4151; the Committee's Environmental Restoration Panel has oversight responsibilities for the IRP and DERP.

--Peter Montague

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### NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT CAPACITY MAY NOT BE NEEDED, STUDY SHOWS

Although the EPA may not know how much hazardous waste is being produced (see RHWN #22, April 27, 1987), the agency has nevertheless tried to estimate where wastes are going today. According to EPA, 55% of hazardous waste still goes to unlined pits and lagoons; 20% goes into sewage treatment plants; 13% is pumped intentionally into the ground (so-called deep well injection); one percent goes into landfills; less than one percent is incinerated; nine percent is "stored."

Is there enough waste management capacity in the U.S. today? Are new facilities needed? A consultant to the EPA (the ICF Corp.) tried to answer this question in 1985 and reported that the nation has sufficient hazardous waste landfill capacity for the next 15 years; only 3% of the nation's chemical treatment capacity is used; only 35% of the nation's deep well injection capacity is used; only 47% of the nation's resource recovery capacity is used; only 54% of the nation's land treatment capacity is used. ICF reported that 90% of the nation's hazardous waste incinerator capacity is used, so this is the only technology in need of expansion today, according to ICF's data.

Since the American people have just begun to ask, "How can we stop creating this waste in the first place?" we may be able to reduce the amounts of waste being generated in the next five to 10 years. If this were to happen, it seems possible that we would not need any new waste processing capacity for decades, if ICF's study is correct.

Citizens fighting the siting of new facilities should take careful note of these figures--they are EPA's best estimate of the need (or lack of need) for new waste-treatment capacity.

For further information on these subjects, see James E. McCarthy and Mark E. Anthony Reisch, HAZARDOUS WASTE FACT BOOK [87-56 ENR] (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, Jan., 1987). Free from Mr. McCarthy at: (202) 287-7225.

--Peter Montague

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### RADON DANGER NOW SUSPECTED IN THIRTEEN STATES; TESTING BEGUN

Radon gas may be a problem in 13 states, says EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency). The Office of Radiation Programs (ORP) within EPA has begun surveying buildings (mostly homes) in Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The problem has already been identified in Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey.

Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless radioactive gas created by the natural decay of naturally-occurring uranium in soil. The cancer-causing gas can build up to dangerous levels in poorly-ventilated homes. Because newer homes are built to conserve energy, it is usually newer homes that are poorly ventilated.

The purpose of the 10-state survey is to identify "hot spots"--areas of these states where radon may present hazards. In homes that are subject to dangerous levels of radon, remedial action can be undertaken to ventilate the buildings better, to reduce the levels of radon.

The survey is being conducted by the ORP Radon Action Program, within EPA. They estimate that results of the 10-state survey will be released in mid-summer, 1987. For further information, contact them at (202) 475-9605.

--Peter Montague

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