

Rachel's Environment & Health News

#21 - EPA Failing To Comply With Law Intended To Close Illegal Dumps

April 19, 1987

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has failed to enforce laws requiring land disposal facilities to certify compliance with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) or shut down, according to a report by the General Accounting Office (GAO). The GAO is an investigative arm of the Congress. On November 8, 1985, land disposal operators were supposed to certify that they were in compliance with RCRA or cease operation.

GAO reports that only 543 of 1538 land disposal operations land disposal facilities nationwide actually certified compliance with RCRA. The remaining 995 were thus legally required to close down.

According to the law, the 995 had exactly one year in which to submit closure plans to the EPA, to receive approval for the plan from EPA, and to close down.

In the three EPA regions surveyed by GAO in September, 1986, less than two months from the statutory deadline, only 2 of 458 non-complying land disposal operations (0.4%) had actually closed. Only 191 closure plans (19%) had been approved nationwide.

EPA officials say their poor performance is attributable to insufficient resources for getting the job done. They say certification of closure plans may take another three years, given the staffing available to do the job. Meanwhile, they agree that the non-complying facilities "represent a potential environmental hazard."

The GAO report, titled, "Hazardous Waste: Enforcement of Certification Requirements for Land Disposal Facilities" [GAO/RCED 87 60BR], is available free from: GAO, P.O. Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877; phone: (202) 275-6241.

--Peter Montague

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'HAZARDOUS WASTE WHEEL' REVEALS DANGERS OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

The average household contains roughly 80 to 100 hazardous household products. They contribute to indoor air pollution, and, when thrown into the local landfill, they contaminate local groundwater and the general environment. Now a "Household Hazardous Waste Wheel" tells you how to dispose safely of seven classes of paint products, 11 classes of pesticides, five kinds of automotive products, and 13 kinds of household products (e.g., oven cleaner, disinfectants, floor and furniture polishes).

Where safe substitutes exist, the Wheel reveals them; where safe disposal means are known, the Wheel tells you about them. The Wheel lists hazardous ingredients, lists toxic effects, and makes us think about why we need (or don't need) all those dubious products that a corporate TV ad campaign convinced us all to buy.

The Household Hazardous Waste Wheel is \$3.25 from Environmental Hazards Management Institute, P.O. Box 283, 137 High St., Portsmouth, NH 03801; phone (603) 436-3950.

--Peter Montague

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IMPORTANT NEW GUIDE PUBLISHED TO HELP IN EMERGENCY PLANNING

The federal EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has published a "Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning Guide" in accordance with Title III of SARA (Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act). The guide is aimed at helping communities prepare and carry out emergency plans related to hazardous

materials fires, spills, releases and other incidents. Every citizen activist can use this guide; for a free copy, write to: HazMat Planning Guide (WH-562A), EPA, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460; phone: (800) 535-0202, or (202) 479-2449.

--Peter Montague

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INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY USED TO DESTROY TOXIC LIQUID CHEMICALS

The EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) has completed a field demonstration of a new technique for destroying dioxins and furans in liquid chemical wastes. The field test successfully decontaminated 8,650 gallons of contaminated wood-preservative wastes in Butte, Montana; in an earlier field trial, the technique was used to decontaminate 7,550 gallons of oily spent solvent in Kent, Washington.

The trials are carried out using a mobile treatment unit that employs the KPEG chemical detoxification technique. KPEG stands for potassium polyethylene glycolate. The KPEG technique reportedly detoxifies chlorinated compounds at lower temperatures and in shorter times than competing techniques. The Butte trials were conducted at 150 degrees Celsius (302 degrees Fahrenheit) for an hour. EPA scientists note that the technique does not work well in the presence of a lot of water and the wastes must be well-mixed to achieve successful decontamination. Regional EPA officials must request a trial of the mobile facility if they want on in their area. Contact Charles Rogers, EPA, 26 West St. Clair Street, Cincinnati, OH 45268; phone (513) 684-7477.

--Peter Montague

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FREE HOTLINE: RCRA, SUPERFUND

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maintains a free 800 phone number for people with questions about the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) or Superfund. Call (800) 424-9346; within DC itself, call (202) 382-3000.

--Peter Montague

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Descriptor terms: epa; emergency preparedness; superfund; sara; hazardous chemicals; emergencies; information services; hazardous materials emergency planning guide; emergency response; epa; superfund; information services; hotlines; rcra; rcra hotline; misfeasance; studies; waste disposal technologies; household hazardous waste; pollution; indoor air pollution; household hazardous waste wheel; environmental hazards management institute; pesticides; paint; wood preservatives; alternative treatment technologies;