

# Rachel's Environment & Health News

## #13 - New Rules To Protect Workers At Dump Sites May Also Reveal Hazards In The Neighborhood February 22, 1987

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has issued new rules for protecting an estimated 200,000 workers at active toxic waste dumps, and at Superfund cleanup sites. The regulations require periodic medical examinations, a minimum of 40 hours of safety and health training for workers at cleanup sites and active dumps, extensive monitoring of air at the sites, and provision of protective gear for employees.

Citizens who inquire should be able to get the monitoring data, and thus learn something about the chemicals that are wafting off-site into neighborhoods near dumps and Superfund cleanup sites. Citizens may also want to inquire about the nature of the medical studies conducted under these regulations, though the details of specific medical findings will be confidential and not available to the public. What medical problems do officials expect and look for? Citizens should be asking similar questions about their neighbors and themselves, if they live near a dump.

Under the new rules, employers must tell employees of expected exposures before they enter a dangerous area and must develop emergency response and decontamination programs. OSHA estimates that more than 30,000 workers are involved in Superfund cleanups; 137,000 workers are employed by operators of hazardous waste dumps. Also covered indirectly are the 4,000 to 40,000 emergency fire, police and other workers who might be exposed to spills of hazardous materials in accidents. The new "interim final" rules are effective immediately. They appeared in the FEDERAL REGISTER Dec. 19, 1986, available at libraries or from OSHA itself. The interim final OSHA rule is based on a 1985 document issued jointly by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, OSHA, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, entitled, "Occupational Safety and Health Guidance Manual for Hazardous Waste Site Activities." To learn more about the latest OSHA rules, phone or write Chappell Pierce, OSHA, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210; (202) 523-8017.

--Peter Montague

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### INNOVATIVE ILLINOIS LAW DETERS LAND DISPOSAL OF TOXIC WASTES

The state of Illinois is trying an entirely new approach to control of hazardous chemical dumping. Effective January 1, 1987, a 1981 state law prohibits land disposal of any hazardous chemicals in the state unless the dumper can show that "no economically reasonable and technically feasible" alternative exists and can convince the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to issue a variance to the law. Under the Illinois law, every hazardous waste generator in the state must have a permit for each toxic waste stream; so far about 800 permits have been issued. Of these, 350 have so far applied for a variance from the land disposal ban, and IEPA has granted "most of these," according to Harry Chappel of IEPA in Springfield, IL.

The IEPA has issued "guidelines" for enforcement of the law; the guidelines cover land disposal methods besides just landfilling, such as deep well injection, surface impoundments, and land farming. The IEPA regs also require companies to take account of waste reduction practices that could reduce the need for land disposal of toxics.

After the IAEA issued its "guidelines," the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) issued "emergency" regulations covering the same subject. Citizens for a Better Environment (CBE) in Chicago, joined by IL Attorney General Neil Hartigen, brought a lawsuit charging that the IPCB's regulations only covered landfills and ignored other land disposal methods. They also pointed out that the IPCB regs ignored waste reduction activities that generators could use to avoid the need for waste disposal, and that, since the law was

six years old, no "emergency" existed. The IPCB makes all environmental regulations in Illinois and consists of influential citizens appointed by the governor. The Attorney General is independently elected and does not answer to the governor.

In late January, 1987, an Illinois Appellate Court ruled in favor of CBE and the AG, setting aside the IPCB regs.

Hazardous waste generators from outside Illinois seeking to dump in Illinois are also subject to the Illinois law. The Illinois ban on land disposal is entirely separate from the federal government's restrictions on landfilling of toxics under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). For further information, phone CBE at (312) 939-1540 or the IEPA or the IPCB, which have the same phone number: (217) 782-2829.

--Peter Montague

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### NEW STUDIES: PESTICIDES AND FISH

A.S. Murty. TOXICITY OF PESTICIDES TO FISH. Two Volumes. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press [2000 Corporate Boulevard, NW; (800) 272-7737], 1986. The first volume (\$96) describes the general problem of pesticides in the environment, their accumulation in food chains, and the hazards presented to fish (and thus to the consumers of fish). Volume 2 (\$76) discusses individual pesticide compounds, and environmental hazard prediction and evaluation.

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