



Center for Health, Environment & Justice

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact:
Moirá Bulloch
703-237-2249 ext. 19
mbulloch@chej.org

Environmental Groups Respond to New EPA Dioxin Standards

New Standards Clear Improvement But Questions Remain

Falls Church, VA – On the last day of 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the much-anticipated draft interim preliminary remediation goals (PRGs) for the cleanup of the carcinogen dioxin in soil. In 1985, the EPA released a report finding that the cancer risk to humans from dioxin exposure was by far the highest defined for any chemical by any government agency anywhere in the world. Subsequent research and scientific reviews have only added to our understanding of the extreme toxicity of dioxin.

The EPA's draft recommendation set a new interim PRG for residential areas at 72 parts per trillion (ppt), down from 1,000 ppt. The full report makes clear that the level of 72 ppt will lower non-cancer health risks to the EPA's standard acceptable level of risk. However, these interim standards would need to be lowered to achieve a 1 in 1,000,000 cancer risk.

Commercial and industrial standards have been lowered to 950 ppt from the previous range of 5,000-20,000 ppt.

Lois Gibbs, Executive Director of CHEJ responded to the proposed new standards: "After over twenty years of needless delay, it is gratifying to see this EPA, under the leadership of Administrator Jackson, moving forward to establish interim standards for the cleanup of dioxins in soil. American families have waited a long time for protection from these cancer-causing chemicals. I look forward to 2010 as being the year when the government stops playing politics with our health."

Stephen Lester, CHEJ's Science Director made the following statement: "The EPA's new interim guideline and recommendation of 3.7 ppt for protection against cancer effects at a risk level of one part per million for residential areas is consistent with the science and shows a new commitment to scientific integrity in the EPA's approach to evaluating dioxin contamination. I am confused, however, by the EPA's decision to set the proposed interim standard at 72 ppt when their own report shows that only a limit of 3.7 ppt will lower the risk of cancer caused by dioxin contamination to the EPA's level of acceptable risk. Dioxin is the most carcinogenic chemical known to man, yet the current interim level is not driven by the risk of getting cancer from exposure to dioxin and does not protect American families from a one-in-a million cancer risk."

“The draft interim preliminary remediation goals are encouraging, and I hope to see stricter standards that will reduce the risk of cancer released later this year,” said **Anne Rabe, Program Coordinator** of CHEJ’s Stop Dioxin campaign. “However, I remain concerned over the higher levels allowed for commercial and industrial zones. Commercially zoned land includes our schools, restaurants and parks. Children are particularly susceptible to toxic hazards such as dioxin and 950 parts per trillion is too high for areas where our families typically gather, play and pray.”

A number of states have set soil cleanup standards or guidelines for Dioxin that are less than 10 parts per trillion (ppt), as shown below, including Florida at 7.0 ppt and Oregon at 4.5 ppt.

- Florida 7.0 ppt TEQ
- Maryland 4.5 ppt TCDD
- Oregon 4.5 ppt TCDD
- Mississippi 4.26 ppt TCDD
- Delaware 4.0 ppt TCDD
- Nebraska 3.9 ppt TCDD

The full draft guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/policy/remedy/sfremedy/remedies/dioxinsoil.html>

CHEJ’s November 19th letter to EPA Administrator Jackson commenting on the Dioxin cleanup goals process: available from Moira Bulloch upon request: mbulloch@chej.org, 703-237-2249 ext. 19

January 2009 Letter to President Obama from over 100 community, environmental, health and labor groups concerning Dioxin: http://www.chej.org/documents/Dioxin_Letter_To_Obama.pdf

Additional letters to EPA from doctors, nurses and scientists, and from dioxin-impacted communities: available from Moira Bulloch upon request: mbulloch@chej.org, 703-237-2249 ext. 19

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About CHEJ

The Center for Health, Environment & Justice exists to mentor the movement to build healthier communities by empowering people to prevent harm in as many ways, and for as many people, as possible. We believe this can happen when people and groups have the power to play an integral role in promoting human health and environmental integrity. CHEJ’s role is to provide the tools, the direction, and the encouragement to these people and groups, so that they can build strong, healthy communities where they live, work, learn, shop, play and pray. Following her successful effort to prevent further harm for the people living in contaminated Love Canal, Lois Gibbs founded CHEJ in 1981 in order to continue mentoring others seeking to prevent harm. CHEJ provides mentoring assistance to communities, homeowners, families and individuals throughout the country. To date, CHEJ has assisted over 10,000 groups nationwide. Currently, CHEJ is mentoring community groups in Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Ohio. Details on CHEJ’s efforts to help people and communities prevent harm can be found at <http://chej.org/>.