

## **Lake officials support closing two IEL test wells**

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By KELLY HILL Repository staff writer

LAKE TWP. — Township officials announced Thursday that they will support closing down two monitoring wells at the Industrial Excess Landfill that have registered alarmingly high levels of toxic benzene over the past three years.

The companies responsible for cleaning up the federal Superfund site on Cleveland Avenue NW have asked the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that those intermediate-depth wells, known as 13I and 14I, be closed down.

They claim that the twisted, probably cracked wells are allowing the benzene to drip down from the waste into the water table — and therefore, test results do not give an accurate picture of the ground-water quality.

“If those wells are not abandoned, that benzene is going to continue leaking into the ground water,” said Township Trustee Sue Ruley.

The U.S. EPA has final say on whether the wells will be closed or not. Site officials could not be reached for comment Thursday afternoon.

Chris Borello, president of watchdog group Concerned Citizens of Lake Township, said her group opposes the move.

“We maintain that none of these wells should be closed until independent testing can be done,” she said.

Borello added that any chemicals leaking through the wells, which are just inches wide, are “like teaspoons vs. a swimming pool” compared to the waste that remains in the unlined landfill.

Township geology consultant Tom Shalala said the investigation into the benzene is just beginning, and more wells will be installed.

“We’ve shown through these wells that the source of contamination is from above, and so the best thing to do is get rid of that conduit,” Shalala said, adding that closing the wells “would concern me if there was no intention of investigating this any further.”

Two shallow wells, 13S and 14S, would remain. Well 14S has shown benzene levels since 1992, ranging from a low of 510 parts per million in 1993 to a high of 16,000 parts per million in 2001 and again in November 2002.

The old monitoring wells at the landfill basically consist of slender lengths of pipe put into the ground to suck up water for testing. They have been subjected to years of freezing and thawing ground and the slow settling of the landfill waste.

Two new, double-cased wells were installed near 13I and 14I in May 2002. The new 14I has tested clean since then, in samples taken in four separate months. The new 13I initially showed low levels of benzene which tapered off over subsequent months.

Although the details of the final remedy — including long-term testing — still are being worked

out, a preliminary cost estimate included \$150,000 to shut down 30 testing wells of the about 50 at the landfill.

Six new on-site and four new off-site wells were budgeted at \$204,000. About \$400,000 was allotted to study and clean up the benzene.

IEL test results

Benzene Test results for Industrial Excess Landfill Wells

Old and new 13 and 14 well series, intermediate depth

Benzene levels given in parts per million

13I

March 2001: 12,000

May 2001: 25,000

September 2001: 1,200

April 2002: 11,000

June 2002: 610

July 2002: 67

November 2002: 6

13I New

June 2002: 13

July 2002: 3.6 (a.m. test)

2.8 (p.m. test)

August 2002: 2.8

November 2002: no detects

14I

March 2001: 8,100

May 2001: 2,700

September 2001: 750

April 2002: 4,800

June 2002: 4,200

July 2002: 2,800

November 2002: 7,400

14I New

June 2002: no detects

July 2002: no detects

August 2002: no detects

November 2002: no detects

Source: test results by Sharp Associates