

Voice of the People
Akron Beacon Journal
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EPA's actions raise concerns

I completely differ with your May 29 editorial headlined "Fallout in Uniontown" regarding the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and its role at the Industrial Excess Landfill.

President Ronald Reagan once famously urged us to "trust, but verify." The federal EPA has insisted upon trust from the local community but has bungled all attempts to fully verify the deadly contents within IEL:

- It has never taken a core sample grid of the site. And while it has found plutonium in a bore hole, rather than resample in the same location it simply tested elsewhere.
- The agency has not followed its own guidelines when performing radiation testing. It has field-filtered well samples, knowing that the radioactive isotopes attach themselves to the small particulate matter in the water, and failed to immediately preserve the samples in the field.
- It has allowed the polluters access to the site, yet denied permission for a citizens group to perform well tests at no expense to the agency. And it has plugged the wells most crucial to radiation testing.
- The agency's "independent" ombudsman, Robert Martin, resigned under pressure, feeling he was no longer truly independent. And most damaging is its final "cleanup" plan for the porous sand-and-gravel pit 30 times larger than the infamous Love Canal: simply planting flowers and trees.

These are hardly acts that inspire trust, let alone verify that the site is devoid of radioactive contamination. Contrary to your subheadline ("The EPA answers concerns about radiation"), these are acts that raise concerns rather than answer them.

I invite the Beacon Journal to contrast these with the specific, detailed findings of significant levels of tritium in adjacent but off-site wells, as cited in the May report by Mark Baskaran of Wayne State University, an internationally known expert on radiation in the environment, and Dr. Michael Ketterer of Northern Arizona University, an expert in "fingerprinting" sources of environmental radioactivity. Clearly, the report indicates that the radiation is site-specific, not naturally occurring.

My own children attended a preschool immediately adjacent to IEL. I often wonder how much groundwater they've ingested. I also worry about all the children living in close proximity to IEL, as well.

Rather than simply trust authority, I'll teach my children that trust must be earned. I'll teach them to question authority; think for themselves; challenge authority, if necessary; then confront and work to replace it if the facts just don't add up.

I'll teach them that trust goes hand in hand with the truth.

Joseph A. Mosyjowski
Randolph Township