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From: Carey, Curtis
Sent: Tue 11/22/2016 9:42:56 PM
Subject: Updated AP Story -- quote from Rep. Wagner

EPA to test home near landfill for radioactive contamination

by Jim Salter, AP

ST. LOUIS (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency will test for radioactive contamination at a home near a St. Louis County landfill, a Superfund site where illegally buried nuclear waste sits near an underground fire, the EPA's regional administrator said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Region 7 Administrator Mark Hague also said that the agency will miss a year-end deadline for a remediation plan for the West Lake Landfill site in Bridgeton. No new timetable was given.

Cold War-era nuclear waste was buried at West Lake in the 1970s. Making matters worse, an underground fire has burned in recent years just a few hundred feet away at the adjacent Bridgeton Landfill. Both landfills are owned by Republic Services, which is spending millions to both contain the fire and to reduce a significant odor.

Last week, Bridgeton residents Michael and Robbin Dailey filed suit against Republic Services and other companies, claiming sampling conducted at their home found high levels of radioactive material.

Hague said in a teleconference the new testing at the Dailey home is "out of an abundance of concern for the community."

"As a public health agency we're committed in getting scientific facts and evaluating data to make a determination of what, if any, potential contamination is out there," Hague said.

The EPA plan calls for additional testing elsewhere if radioactive material is found at the Dailey home.

The EPA has previously said that despite the radioactive waste and the fire at the landfill site, there is no increased risk for neighboring residents or people who work at the landfill. The agency also has not found evidence that radioactive material has migrated beyond the landfill.

West Lake was declared a Superfund site in 1990. In 2008, the EPA announced a remediation plan to cap the nuclear waste with rock, clay and soil. The plan was dropped after significant opposition.

The agency cited the complexity of the problem at West Lake in announcing the delay in coming up with a new plan.

The delay drew an angry response from U.S. Rep. Ann Wagner, a St. Louis County Republican.

"It is reprehensible that the EPA has continued to drag their feet and not take responsibility for cleanup at the West Lake Landfill," Wagner said in a statement. "Today's announcement only reinforces why it is critical we transfer cleanup of the site from the EPA to the Army Corps."

Several local activists have called for the corps to take over cleanup of the site. In fact, Hague said the corps has agreed to work alongside EPA on the project.

Russ Knocke, spokesman for Republic Services, said science “should be the guide” as the federal agencies move forward.

“The community has waited eight years for more testing,” Knocke said. “We can wait a few more months for science.”

Ed Smith, policy director for the Missouri Coalition for the Environment, said buyouts should be offered to homeowners if radioactive contamination is found outside of the landfill site.