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Sent: 10/14/2014 3:06:13 PM
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Subject: 10/13 - Hunters Point NBC 11 re radiation soil samples

We talked in detail about this already in June to prepare David Yogi for the Bus Tour when we expected this issue to come up. Not much has changed since then. I will draft some quick talking pts to refresh everyone's memory on this issue.

http://www.nbcbayarea.com/investigations/Contractor-Submitted-False-Radiation-Data-at-Hunters-Point-279025911.html

Monday, Oct 13, 2014 • Updated at 11:44 PM PDT
A Navy contractor tasked with cleaning radioactive soil at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco admitted in an internal report obtained exclusively by the NBC Bay Area Investigative Unit that it mishandled soil samples and submitted false data.
Tetra Tech, a multinational engineering, construction and environmental corporation details in an April 2014 report how it was caught submitting false soil samples to the Navy in an apparent effort to declare the soil free of radiological contamination when it may not have been. The Pasadena-based company is a $2.7 billion per year business that has won more than $300 million worth of contracts for cleanup work at Hunters Point.
Hunters Point is an 866-acre piece of waterfront property in the southeast portion of San Francisco that is slated to become one of the largest urban housing, retail and recreational developments in the nation. Development giant Lennar Corporation recently began selling the first batch of condominiums at Hunters Point for move-in this winter. But the shipyard is also a federal superfund site contaminated with petroleum fuels, pesticides and volatile organic compounds, as well as radiological material from a nuclear research lab that included radiation experiments and the decontamination of warships.
The internal Tetra Tech report adds to mounting concerns that the remediation of the shipyard has been botched and that the health of future residents is at risk.

- Former Contractors Claim Hunters Point Cleanup is Botched

"These members of the general public could be exposed to contaminants that are not supposed to be there—unknowingly," said Bert Bowers, a radiological safety consultant who worked for Tetra Tech at Hunters Point in 2010 and 2011.
According to the report, in October 2012 the Navy determined that soil sample results were inconsistent with results from previous samples collected in the same area. The real samples were supposed to come from the soil beneath a former lab used to conduct radiation tests on animals. Tetra Tech's own investigation found that the soil was actually "collected from locations different than the ones specified"—areas that had already tested clean for radiological contamination.
"Basically it was faked," Bowers said. "They basically collected a false sample and analyzed it and put a report out that had false results."
Tetra Tech states that it retested 12 additional areas on Parcels C and E, portions of the shipyard where soil samples may have been misrepresented. The report reveals that when Tetra Tech tested the locations again, it discovered that some had elevated levels of radiological contamination. The contractor subsequently remediated those locations.
"If the Navy had not caught this," Bowers said, "there would be very, very high levels of contaminated soil, radioactive soil in the ground, where the plans are in place to build homes for the general public to live in, with yards for children to play in."

Bowers is one of four radiation specialists who blew the whistle on Tetra Tech's practices and are now suing the company for retaliation, claiming they were fired after questioning the company's actions. Bowers first spoke with the Investigative Unit earlier this year saying the cleanup of Hunters Point had been compromised and that Tetra Tech cut corners on safety to save money.
View an interactive on a separate page.
Many other people including Ahimsa Sumchai, a former member of the Hunters Point Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), have questioned the $1 billion, two-decade long cleanup of the shipyard.
"This is huge," Sumchai said after reviewing the report. "This is a very, very big incident. In the over 10 years that I have been working with the shipyard cleanup issues, this is one of the biggest."
For years she has fought for more action from the Navy, and from regulators who have monitored the remediation of Hunters Point. She called upon the California Department of Public Health, which oversees the radiological operations at Hunters Point, to "make a statement about the health and safety impacts" of the actions detailed in Tetra Tech's own report.
Stephen Woods, the radiation safety chief for the state health department told the Investigative Unit in May that he would grant an interview request to discuss the Tetra Tech report. The agency has since changed its mind, instead saying that the department "will not be officially commenting."
The Department of Toxic Substances Control, the lead state agency on the project, has also remained silent. In an email to NBC Bay Area a department representative wrote "we have no comment on the report."
The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the federal agency in charge of licensing Tetra Tech, said in an email that it is aware of soil issues at Hunters Point but that it hasn't taken any enforcement action against the company as a result of the false samples.
Sumchai said the regulatory agencies cannot ignore these events.
"You can't bury anything like this, it's too big," Sumchai said. "There are too many people involved. It raises too many issues about other incidents."

- Workers Say Hunters Point Dirt Needs Radiation Screening

Tetra Tech's cleanup of Hunters Point continues, and just last month the company won two more contracts totaling $7.5 million for work at the site.
Tetra Tech declined multiple requests for comment, but in the report blamed sample collectors for the false samples that were submitted to the Navy. After completing its investigation, Tetra Tech came up with multiple theories but could not conclude how or why the samples were falsified.
The company disciplined two supervisors, retrained workers on how to properly collect soil samples and conducted ethical training for employees. Tetra Tech said that after issuing the corrective action, the company "has not had a recurrence" of false samples "indicating that the corrective actions have addressed the problem."
The Navy also declined an on-camera interview request but said it will continue to evaluate all current and historic data collected by Tetra Tech, acknowledging that the event calls into question the quality of data provided by the contractor in the past. In an email the Navy said it is "committed to ensuring that all reports contain accurate and defensible data."
View an interactive on a separate page.
If you have a tip for the Investigative Unit email theunit@nbcbayarea.com or call 888-996-TIPS.