Message

From: Kaiser, Steven [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=10BF2440EDD749D2845015C7AB59FF4B-SKAISE02]
Sent: 9/23/2016 2:32:33 PM
To: Carla Morgan [cmorgan@eastchicago.com]; McCoy, Lisa [LMcCoy@idem.IN.gov]
CC: Toney, Marcy [toney.marcy@epa.gov]
Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs September 23, 2016

WLFI - New polling place sought for contaminated housing complex

WBAA - As East Chicago Deals With Lead, Health Dept. Says It Keeps Hoosiers Safe In Crises

WBAA - EPA Splits East Chicago Cleanup Plan Into Three Parts

WBEZ - Why Isn't Chicago Digging Up Lead Pipes?

Lake Shore Public Media - EPA Named East Chicago A Superfund Site, But What Does That Mean?

WYFI - East Chicago School, Families Face Challenges After Lead Discovery

Lake Shore Public Media - EPA Response To East Chicago Lead Typical For Soil Contamination

ABC News – Timeline of a Decades-Long Contamination Threat in Indiana

Journal Times - Lead crisis in housing project was actually no surprise

Note – neither American Lead (Indianapolis) nor Pilsen lead clips

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http://wlfi.com/2016/09/21/new-polling-place-sought-for-contaminated-housing-complex/

New polling place sought for contaminated housing complex

Associated Press Published: September 21, 2016, 2:21 pm

EAST CHICAGO, Ind. (AP) — Lake County election officials are searching for a new polling place where residents of a lead-contaminated public housing complex can vote this fall.

County Elections Director Michelle Fajman said Tuesday that precinct committeemen are expected to meet soon to suggest an alternate polling place to replace the one used last spring in the recreation center of the West Calumet Housing Complex in East Chicago.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has released data showing the soil at the complex is highly contaminated with lead and arsenic, and the city has decided to demolish the complex.

The (Northwest Indiana) Times reports Fajman said a recent mailing to registered voters in the complex are being returned because they've already relocated and left no forwarding addresses.

http://wbaa.org/post/east-chicago-deals-lead-health-dept-says-it-keeps-hoosiers-safe-crises

As East Chicago Deals With Lead, Health Dept. Says It Keeps Hoosiers Safe In Crises

By STAN JASTRZEBSKI • 3 HOURS AGO

Three weeks into what some agencies refer to as "National Preparedness Month," the Indiana Department of Health has sent out a press release congratulating itself on the state's response to health crises and reminding Hoosiers to keep themselves safe from public health concerns. But the affirmation comes at a strange time -- *during* a public health crisis in East Chicago.

The release says Hoosiers should protect themselves against health emergencies such as Zika, Ebola and HIV. But could East Chicago residents have protected themselves against a site where state and federal officials have been measuring lead levels in the soil since 1985?

"You know, the best thing people can do, maybe, is just try to do research; educate themselves on things like lead. That's a good question," says state Director of Public Health Preparedness and Emergency Response Lee Christenson.

The Health Department has provided $100,000 for blood lead testing and is helping local health officials respond to the crisis. But East Chicago State Senator Lonnie Randolph says he's puzzled by the timing and the nature of the press release.

"Anything else should be secondary – you shouldn't even be thinking about press releases, OK? PR is the last thing that should be on your mind," Randolph says. "Service and help should be the main focal point of this whole endeavor right now."

Randolph and Christenson both say Hoosiers should be the first caretakers of their own health and that the government should assist in extraordinary circumstances where individual resources are insufficient.

http://wbaa.org/post/epa-splits-east-chicago-cleanup-plan-three-parts

EPA Splits East Chicago Cleanup Plan Into Three Parts

By NICK JANZEN • 2 HOURS AGO

The Environmental Protection Agency is moving forward on plans to clean up a lead contaminated residential neighborhood in East Chicago.

The EPA has split the 3,000-person neighborhood in three, with a different plan for each part. The Calumet neighborhood of East Chicago sits on a Superfund site that's divided into three zones – 1,2 and 3 – based on who's asked to pay for the cleanup.

EPA Regional Administrator Robert Kaplan says the lead contaminated soil in Zone 3 will simply be removed -- dug out.

"That was the original plan and there's no variation in it," Kaplan says.

That plan was formed in 2012 after an agreement was finalized with Atlantic Richfield and DuPont to clean the area.

Kaplan says the plan to remedy Zone 2 is still being determined because it was not a part of that consent decree.

Zone 1 covers the West Calumet Housing Complex. It was going to be cleaned up like Zone 3, until East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland decided the complex needed to be demolished. Now, Kaplan says two things need to happen. Residents need to move out and the city has to determine what will be built where the complex once stood.

"We need to know what it is we're building to," he says. " So, is it going to be commercial/industrial? Or is it going to be residential?"

Kaplan says the EPA will use a higher clean up standard—basically make the area safer—if the city wants to put in a residential development.

https://www.wbez.org/shows/morning-shift/why-isnt-chicago-digging-up-lead-pipes/fcc1ff31-1f52-47b2-a5a6-43b74ed2b2bf

Why Isn't Chicago Digging Up Lead Pipes?

September 22, 2016

From Milwaukee to Philly, cities around the country are updating their old and aging water systems, getting rid of the lead pipes that can put so many residents at risk. So why isn't Chicago?

Mayor Rahm Emanuel has budgeted more than $400 million to water-related projects in an effort to modernize Chicago's water system, but none of that money will be going to replacing the antiquated lead pipes. The *Chicago Tribune's* Michael Hawthorne is in the studio to delve into Chicago's lead problem.

http://lakeshorepublicmedia.org/indiana-superfund-map/

EPA Named East Chicago A Superfund Site, But What Does That Mean?

By: Lauren Chapman, IPB News

The Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund program was started in 1980, and since its inception, it has added 49 sites in Indiana to its National Priority List.

A Superfund is a site designation by the EPA to receive state and federal money to clean up hazardous waste that poses a threat to public health.

To determine if the threat level is high enough to warrant state and federal assistance, the EPA uses a Hazard Ranking System scored from 0-100. Sites ranking 28.5 and above are eligible for state and federal cleanup assistance.

Once something is eligible, the EPA inspects it to determine if it will become a Superfund site. If the clean up is fairly simple, or it is not an immediate threat to human health, or a different program is better suited for the task — it might not become a Superfund.

If the opposite is true — the cleanup is complicated, it poses an immediate threat, or few funds are available for cleanup — it is designated a Superfund and placed on the National Priorities List, NPL. For example, in 2008 EPA documents scored East Chicago's Calumet neighborhood a 58.1.

State environmental quality and health agencies are primarily responsible for providing testing and data, and the site was referred to the NPL.

The designation came after a failed attempt to clean the site through other funding. The area was tested in 1992, but it was not put on the NPL. It was added to an alternative program called the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

RCRA allowed supervision of clean-up efforts from the company found responsible for the pollution, USS Lead. And the cleanup was confined to the original property of USS Lead, not the East Chicago neighborhood next door, to its north.

According to EPA documents from 2004, it was decided that the original site and the residential neighborhoods to the north should be added to the NPL.

The Superfund program was created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), which was signed into law in 1980 to tackle the cost for clean-up efforts.

To do this, the law established a tax on chemical and petroleum industries for five years, which created a $1.6 billion trust fund.

Superfund cleanup efforts are also funded by any businesses that are found to be responsible for the contamination.

In East Chicago, the original property of USS Lead was cleaned up by the RCRA.

Soil on residential properties wasn't tested until 2003. At that point, USS Lead funds for soil remediation had run out. The West Calumet Housing Complex and those residential neighborhoods became the responsibility of Atlantic Richfield and DuPont, according to a 2014 consent decree, due to their historic activity in the area.

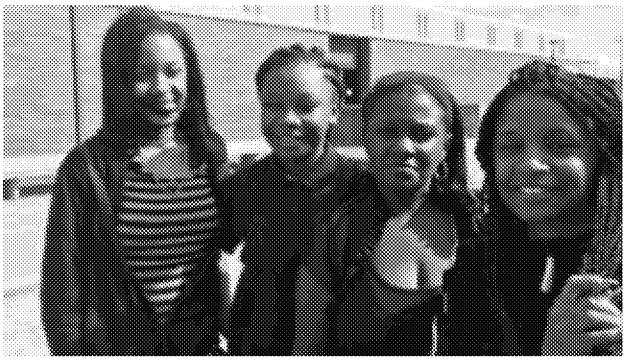
After cleanup efforts have been completed, the EPA deletes the site from the NPL.

In Indiana, 10 of the state's 49 sites have been successfully removed from the list.

http://www.wfyi.org/news/articles/e-chicago-school-families-face-challenges-after-lead-discovery

East Chicago School, Families Face Challenges After Lead Discovery

Claire McInerny - StateImpact Indiana



Latasha Marshall and her three daughters Deanna, Ashley and Janae are planning on moving from East Chicago after finding out their apartment is in the most lead-contaminated part of the city. The three girls will have to transfer schools mid school year.
Claire McInerny/Indiana Public Broadcasting

Latasha Marshall waits for a cab. She sits in the lobby of a Hilton Garden Inn, which serves as her living room this week. The Environmental Protection Agency put her up for the week so the agency can deep clean her home; it tested for high levels of lead.

"The other night when we first got here, I went to sleep and I woke up and I was at ease," Marshall says. "I haven't been sleeping like that at home."

Once it's clean, she can return with her daughters, ages 11, 16 and 17, but not to stay. Her housing complex sits on a superfund site, where the soil contains lead levels over 100 times higher than what the EPA says is safe. This is especially hard for Marshall, because this home was the first she could afford in several years. She moved here after living with relatives in Chicago, Illinois.

"It's hurtful," she says. "I wake up sometimes and am just like 'man, what's the next step, what are we going to do?'"

The cab arrives at the hotel to get Marshall, who doesn't have a car. Her youngest daughter used to walk to Carrie Gosch Elementary School, which was right next to her apartment. The school the taxi takes her to is the new Carrie Gosh. It was an empty, former middle school a few months ago.

The old Carrie Gosch Elementary School building sits right next to the West Calumet housing complex, so it's also on the Superfund site.

The Decision to Move Hundreds of Students

One section of soil at the old building tested at dangerous lead levels. So superintendent Paige McNulty decided to move the hundreds of students to a former middle school located across town.

McNulty says she made this decision quickly, just nine days before school started, when she found out about the contamination.

"We made the decision on a Saturday and school started the following Monday," McNulty says. "So we literally had about five days to move the school."

And McNulty faced a bigger problem:

"It was a middle school, and the school we were moving was a pre-K through sixth grade so I had little, little-bittys moving to a middle school arena," McNulty says.

In less than a week, contractors worked 18-hour days to lower water fountains and toilets, put the IT infrastructure back in the school and get the kitchen up to code. The district received a $3 million loan from the state this month to pay for these costs plus future construction to make the building an elementary school.

McNulty is also trying to make the students feel safe at school. For example, Marshall's sixth grade daughter, Ashley, had no idea what lead was until she heard it was under her home.

"I'm kind of like 'what is that?'," Ashley says. "Then they mentioned it was poison and of the ground and it's been in there for over 40 years and they didn't tell us."

To help kids like Ashley, McNulty says they're bringing the discussion into the classrooms.

"So the teachers got together and wrote lesson plans on water, air, lead, soil so that the kids feel like they're getting some sort of education in their lives so it's not a scary unknown thing," McNulty says.

With Lead Contamination Comes a Logistical Nightmare

Now that students are settling in, and the district received the loan to address construction costs – McNulty is struggling with other logistical problems that come with moving the school to a new building.

"One of our biggest challenges is we were not anticipating busing all those students because those students had been walkers," McNulty says. "Now we had to bus 450 kids to a school that we had not anticipated. We did not have enough bus drivers or buses, and we still don't. We're having to double and triple up routes."

She's also concerned about how fast her enrollment is dropping. So far this year, 200 students switched schools because of the lead, whether it was to attend another East Chicago school or because their family left the town because of the lead. This is harmful to the district as a whole, because the way school funding works in Indiana, the money follows the student. When students leave, the district loses money, and McNulty is watching her state funding dwindle.

"We get $7,200 person student so we've already lost about $1.5 million," McNulty says.

To try and combat this, the district is offering to bus any kid who leaves East Chicago to attend school in neighboring towns back to their East Chicago school.

But leaving East Chicago and the school district – is exactly what Marshall is thinking about doing. She moved to East Chicago from inner city Chicago, Ill.

"I wanted to leave Chicago," Marshall says. "I didn't want to be there with all the violence and everything going on– kids are not safe. And that was my big issue so I wanted to bring them to a better environment, and apparently not."

So now, Marshall is hoping her voucher from the The U.S. Housing and Urban Development agency to move covers the cost of moving back to Chicago, but to the suburbs this time.

http://lakeshorepublicmedia.org/epa-response-to-east-chicago-lead-typical-for-soil-contamination/

EPA Response To East Chicago Lead Typical For Soil Contamination

By: Nick Janzen, IPB News

Government officials first found high levels of lead and arsenic at an East Chicago lead smelting plant in 1985. Thirty years later, after countless soil samples and elevated blood lead level tests, clean-up has begun. Why did it take so long?

Robert Kaplan oversees the Environmental Protection Agency's work in the Midwest – he's the Region 5 Administrator.

"I'm showing you an overhead aerial flight from 1949, and you've got the DuPont facility over here, you've got some other facilities over here, you've got two pre-existing neighborhoods," Kaplan says.

He's pointing to an aerial picture from 1949 – pointing out industries that operated in the Calumet neighborhood of East Chicago.

Today, it is more residential: single family homes, an affordable housing complex, and an elementary school.

It also has dangerous levels of lead and arsenic in its soil, which everyone agrees came from the former industries. The EPA has a record of this dating back 30 years, when the USS Lead smelting plant closed in 1985.

At that time the EPA and USS Lead began cleaning up the former smelting plant — but not the surrounding neighborhood.

Starting in 1991, the Indiana State Department of Health began testing children for elevated blood lead levels. Results weren't published until 1998, but between 1998 and 2008, the state found 275 children with elevated levels.

Soil tests in the residential area, now home to an estimated 3,000 people, weren't conducted until 2003.

Kaplan did not oversee the EPA's work in the Midwest at that time.

"I really can't speak to what happened between 1985 and 2003," Kaplan says.

He took his current role earlier this year, after the last Region 5 administrator, Susan Hedman, stepped down during the Flint water crisis. Kaplan says, once the EPA started testing in Calumet, it found some extreme values.

"By extreme values I mean, for instance, I mean we found one 45,000 ppm. We also found in the subsurface one 91,000 ppm," Kaplan says.

These values are 100 and 200 times too high.

In 2006, the EPA removed soil from 13 properties, and a clean up plan for two-thirds of the neighborhood was finalized in 2012.

Marc Lame is an environmental professor at Indiana University. He's also worked as an advisor to the EPA and Arizona's Department of Environmental Quality. He says this timing is actually par for the

course for this type of public safety hazard, because lead in soil is harder to ingest than, for example, lead in water.

"It does take a little bit to have a significant exposure and things like that, so, I'm not saying that's right, but I'm saying that this is more typical," Lame says.

There are a lot steps in the process. In 2003, when high levels of lead and arsenic were measured in the residential neighborhood, USS Lead was bankrupt.

The site was added to the National Priorities List in 2008. Between then and 2014, the EPA needed to negotiate new clean up agreements with DuPont and Atlantic Richfield, companies that also operated lead facilities in the area.

Lame says the EPA also had budget cuts, those slow things down too.

Overall, he says the most important thing government agencies can do — at the local, state, and federal level — is involve the community.

"I tell my students that it's a pain in the butt to try to always work with people on the outside to come up with what's right for them. But if you don't do it, in the long run it's going to turn around and cost you," Lame says.

The EPA did reach out. In the last 30 years, it mounted public information campaigns, public meetings, mailers and blood testing announcements. Many residents say they didn't get this information. But the Kaplan has this report, and says the EPA did everything it could.

"If you go through it, these are all the fact sheets that we came up with, these are all the public meetings, and postcards that we sent," Kaplan says. "You're not going to reach everyone."

The EPA's cleanup plan is moving now. The agency just announced it will pay to start clean up on the last section of the neighborhood, at least until it can identify which companies can be held financially responsible.

http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/timeline-decades-long-contamination-threat-indiana-42299112

Timeline of a Decades-Long Contamination Threat in Indiana

- By the associated press
  Sep 23, 2016, 2:03 AM ET
  The order to evacuate an Indiana public-housing complex contaminated with lead came more than three decades after the problem first emerged. Here's a look at key events:

— 1906: What would become the U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery, or USS Lead, begins operation in East Chicago, Indiana. For 79 years, a copper smelter, lead refinery and secondary lead smelter operated on the site just south of the West Calumet Housing Complex. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency now says the plant is a likely source of lead contamination throughout neighboring residential areas.

— 1972: The West Calumet Housing Complex is built on the site of the old Anaconda Lead Products facility. Years later, evidence emerges that houses were built on top of toxic demolition debris from the plant.

— 1985: The Indiana Department of Environmental Management samples some residential properties near the USS Lead site and finds elevated lead levels in residential yards. Health officials also find high lead levels in blood screenings on dozens of children in the area.

— 1985: The USS Lead plant closes.

— 1993: The EPA begins cleanup of the USS Lead site. Within a few years, all of the buildings are demolished, with contaminated materials buried in a capped landfill.

— JANUARY 2008: An internal EPA memo notes that the conditions present "an imminent and substantial endangerment to the public health, welfare, and the environment." Later that year, the EPA hauls away more than 1,800 tons of lead-contaminated soil at around a dozen residential properties.

— APRIL 2009: The USS Lead site, the housing complex and hundreds of private homes are added to the EPA's national priorities list of Superfund sites.

— JULY 2012: The EPA proposes a remediation plan that calls for removing up to 2 feet of contaminated soil from properties and replacing it with clean soil. The agency estimates 723 of the 1,271 properties in the area will require cleanup. Mayor Anthony Copeland says a more extensive cleanup is needed, warning the EPA plan would leave East Chicago with a "wasteland."

— JUNE 16, 2016: After receiving detailed soil sampling data, Copeland says in a June 16 letter to the EPA that it's clear soil removals in 2008 and 2011 were "incomplete and ineffective," but he nonetheless presses the EPA to immediately begin the new excavation.

— JULY 2016: The EPA circulates flyers to residents with information on ways of protecting themselves from lead exposure. The mayor sends letters to housing complex residents advising them to relocate temporarily. But two days later, the city housing authority proposes demolishing the complex.

— SEPTEMBER 2016: Federal vouchers to help residents pay rent at new homes go into effect.

http://m.journaltimes.com/news/national/lead-crisis-in-housing-project-was-actually-no-surprise/article_6ba0fa77-2658-5467-8616-3e0a275d9f90.html

Lead crisis in housing project was actually no surprise

- By SARA BURNETT and JASON KEYSER Associated Press
-
- Updated 3 hrs ago EAST CHICAGO, Ind. (AP) — When the mayor in this industrial town ordered the evacuation of a 40-year-old public-housing complex this summer because of severe lead contamination, many people wondered: How could the problem have been overlooked for so long?

The complex, in a blighted corner of Indiana just across from Chicago, had been built on ground once occupied by a lead-products factory. Some yards had lead levels more than 70 times the federal safety standard.

The abrupt order to remove more than 1,000 residents, including about 700 children, made headlines across the country.

But it turns out the hazard wasn't — or shouldn't have been — a surprise to anyone in public office in East Chicago or responsible for the safety of the West Calumet Housing Complex.

A review of public documents and news coverage dating back to the 1960s shows officials at half a dozen local, state and federal agencies were aware residents were living on and playing in lead-tainted soil, though some of the most alarming readings weren't widely known until recently.

In 1985, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management found elevated lead levels in yards just east of the complex, according to department records. The same year, the Indiana Department of Health found high lead levels in blood samples of some residents' children. Even at low levels, exposure can cause nervous system damage and lowered IQs, according to experts.

In 2008, an EPA memo described "an imminent and substantial endangerment to the public health, welfare and the environment."

Instead of prompting urgent action, the situation in East Chicago instead became an example of how longstanding problems can linger indefinitely in some industrial hubs and how environmental cleanups are often grindingly slow, hamstrung by high costs and the fact that the companies responsible for the pollution have long since gone out of business.

"It's mind-boggling. You have so many people who could have and should have done something," said state Sen. Lonnie Randolph, an East Chicago native who's represented the city since 2008. "The bottom line is somebody just didn't care."

The history and local politics of East Chicago, a poor, largely black and Hispanic community of about 30,000, also played a role.

People were unlikely to complain about factories that provided their livelihood, some here say, and the town's top public officials have often been corrupt.

The housing authority director who chose the site in the late 1960s was indicted years later for taking kickbacks from the developer who built the project, records show. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy charges and agreed to testify against other defendants.

Two of the last three mayors were convicted of corruption. The third, defeated in 2004 after serving more than 30 years, was cited in a malfeasance lawsuit against the city administration that resulted in a $108 million judgment.

The city councilman for the project has been jailed since last fall on a murder charge.

The evacuation order came in the wake of a highly publicized scandal in Flint, Michigan, where local and state officials were accused of making a lax response to lead contamination of the local water supply. Nine have been charged or taken plea deals after an attorney general's investigation.

East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland has refused interview requests, deferring to City Attorney Carla Morgan, who says officials acted quickly after learning the latest soil sampling results in May.

She also told AP that the problems had been aired in public hearings over the years.

"The public knew everything we knew," Morgan said.

However, in 2010 the EPA interviewed 25 residents and noted in a report that "the majority of people said that they knew little or nothing about the site."

For years, the signs welcoming people to East Chicago proclaimed the city the "Industrial Capital of the World."

One of the industries was the Anaconda Lead Products plant, which operated from at least 1938 to 1965. Just to the south sat the sprawling U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery, or USS Lead, which salvaged lead from old car batteries and scrap metal. Lead dust filtered by the smelter's smokestacks was piled on the ground, open to the wind.

Smoke in the air "was a good thing, because it meant jobs," said Thomas Frank, who tried unsuccessfully to start an environmental movement in East Chicago after moving to his wife's hometown about 20 years ago.

In 1972, the city built the West Calumet Housing Complex, made up of three-story apartment buildings and brick duplexes with large lawns, on the old Anaconda plant site to provide housing for low-income residents.

Modern-day sensibilities would reject such an idea, but when the East Chicago Housing Authority was searching for sites, Executive Director Benjamin Lesniak said there was little available land except "in vacant areas which are surrounded by industries and undesirable residential areas," according to a 1966 Chicago Tribune article.

Blowing dust from USS Lead was probably responsible for most of the area's contamination, according to the EPA. But according to a city letter to the EPA, utility workers also found signs of toxic demolition debris from Anaconda under housing project homes. That was one of numerous red flags to emerge since USS Lead closed in 1985, according to documents reviewed by AP.

In 1991, USS Lead agreed to pay a $55,000 fine and place tarps over the lead dust piles. The factory buildings were demolished.

But it was almost another decade before the EPA conducted what it called "time-critical" removal of contaminated soil in nearby residential areas. The EPA planned to replace as much as 2 feet of topsoil with clean earth at 723 properties, at a cost of about $29 million.

Copeland, who took office in 2010, demanded the excavation go deeper. All the while, residents say they knew little about the seriousness of the threat. Public meetings on the issue appear to have been sparsely attended.

In May, after the EPA gave the city the results of testing last year that showed alarming hotspots, Copeland delivered the shocking news that everyone would have to leave.

EPA officials say they still stand by their original soil removal plan.

"We see this quite often," said Douglas Ballotti, deputy director of EPA's Superfund Division, citing many people who say, "Just get it all out of here."

"We have to look at it from cost-effectiveness," he said, since federal funds will have to cover most of the costs.

West Calumet residents, meanwhile, are struggling to find new places to live with the HUD vouchers they received, but tenants say some landlords won't rent to housing project residents.

Shantel Allen, whose yard is one of the most contaminated, said she's been notified that her 2-year-old daughter's blood lead levels were six times beyond what the Centers for Disease Control considers concerning.

Allen, who's married and has four other children, says the family's health problems — from ADHD to headaches — "make sense now."

"I'm upset because we were the last to know," she said.

Keyser reported from Chicago. Associated Press researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Sincerely,

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