Message

From: Brad Gentry [bgentry@iwmconsult.com]
Sent: 5/15/2019 1:13:40 PM
To: Bury, Carolyn [bury.carolyn@epa.gov]
CC: Joe Bianchi (jbian@amphenol-aao.com) [jbian@amphenol-aao.com]
Subject: RE: condifential FW: Franklin Power/Amphenol News Clips, May 14, 2019

Thank you Carolyn. Joe would like to participate in the pre-call today at 10 AM. Can you please send him the invite?

Thanks

Sincerely,

Bradley E. Gentry, LPG
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From: Bury, Carolyn <bury.carolyn@epa.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 8:38 AM
To: Brad Gentry <bgentry@iwmconsult.com>
Subject: FW: condifential FW: Franklin Power/Amphenol News Clips, May 14, 2019

Hi – I assume you saw this article, but sending in case not.

From: Bury, Carolyn
Sent: Wednesday, May 15, 2019 7:30 AM
To: Sundar, Bhooma <sundar.bhooma@epa.gov>; Neal, Conor <Neal.Conor@epa.gov>; Caudill, Motria <caudill.motria@epa.gov>
Subject: condifential FW: Franklin Power/Amphenol News Clips, May 14, 2019

I think that I already sent this Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP) Background for today's call. Also please see the tables sent for Ex. 6 Personal Privacy (PP)

From: Arcaute, Francisco
Sent: Tuesday, May 14, 2019 9:29 AM
To: Subject: Franklin Power/Amphenol News Clips, May 14, 2019

Franklin Power/Amphenol News Clips, May 14, 2019

https://www.indystar.com/story/news/environment/2019/05/14/epa-under-review-see-if-left-franklin-families-risk-pollution/1187723001/

Indy Star EPA fails to communicate risks of Franklin contamination, leaves families exposed to toxic chemicals

EPA fails to communicate risks of Franklin contamination, leaves families exposed to toxic chemicals

Sarah Bowman, **Indianapolis Star**
Published 6:00 a.m. ET May 14, 2019 | **Updated 7:42 a.m. ET May 14, 2019**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency discovered cancer-causing chemicals in the ground and sewers down the street from Kathy and David Carlson's Franklin house in the 1980s, but the Carlsons weren't informed of the risk for nearly 30 years.

And it wasn't by the EPA. It was from a nonprofit started by parents.

"We didn't put all this stuff together and we are still putting it together, but not because of anything the EPA has done — absolutely nothing," said Kathy Carlson, a professor at Franklin College. The Carlsons have now learned enough that when David was diagnosed with cancer last year, their stomachs twisted into knots.

"We live less than a mile away," she added, "and we have been utterly in the dark."

Now the EPA Office of Inspector General is studying whether the agency is doing an adequate job of "risk communication," or informing residents when environmental risks are discovered in their neighborhoods. Its study will examine eight sites, including the one near the Carlsons in Franklin.

And an IndyStar review of EPA communication guidelines suggests several reasons for concern in the agency's handling of the contamination in Franklin:

- The EPA stated publicly that the contamination was "under control" without any scientific testing to back it up.
- The EPA didn't inform residents about upcoming testing, leading to confusion, which may have caused some in the community to decline sampling.
- The EPA didn't involve the community as an active participant in making decisions about the site.

Similar to the Carlsons, numerous Franklin residents credit their knowledge of the city's pollution problems to the local nonprofit known as If It Was Your Child. Stacie Davidson and Kari Rhinehart co-founded the group in 2014 to raise awareness and share information about contamination in their community — a job they said the EPA should have been doing.

The OIG traveled to Franklin last Wednesday to hear from residents. The government watchdog is visiting four of the eight sites as part of its review of the EPA's communication efforts and if it shares information in a way that allows families to take steps to protect themselves.

The EPA did not answer IndyStar's questions, but sent a statement via email saying it welcomed the opportunity to meet with the OIG to help with its audit.

"Properly communicating risk to the public is a fundamental part of EPA's mission," the statement read. "[EPA] Administrator [Andrew] Wheeler has placed a renewed emphasis on this aspect of our job and we welcome the OIG review and look forward to working with them and the community on this effort."

EPA says pollution 'under control'

Davidson and Rhinehart, along with New Jersey-based environmental nonprofit Edison Wetlands Association, sent a letter in January to the Inspector General demanding an investigation into why toxic contamination at the former Amphenol site in Franklin persists.

As part of the OIG's review, project manager Jill Trynosky said they will examine how closely the EPA has followed its guidelines on risk communication. IndyStar found and examined the EPA's risk communication workbook for its own analysis.

Two of the key "Do's and Don'ts" listed are to be honest and open and to not speak in absolutes.

But last year, around the time of the EPA's first community meeting in Franklin, EPA and state officials maintained that everything was "under control" and that the contamination had not moved or spread — despite having not completed updated testing to support that statement.

An IndyStar review of thousands pages of documents had found that the city's contamination problem went back decades, and that serious data gaps existed as to the extent of the contamination. Questions emerged about whether the treatment system in place was actually removing the toxic metals.

"The city, state and EPA were so quick to try to get out in front of this and discredit it from the get go," Rhinehart said, "instead of acknowledging it and saying 'we have to work together to get this fixed.'"

When that testing was in fact completed and shared in November, it showed the toxic chemicals had actually spread and were under residential areas in Franklin, exactly as risk assessment models from the '90s predicted it would.

"That was a very reckless statement and very confusing for people," Davidson said. "To say it's not widespread, people want to believe that and they should be able to believe that from the EPA."

The EPA's workbook says it is important that the agency "earn trust and establish credibility" and "listen to community fears" to be able to effectively communicate.

And still the agency did not inform residents that it had hired an environmental consultant to do contamination testing inside their homes. Seeing a name they didn't recognize, most residents declined the testing.

"There were a lot of steps that were not taken and a lot of steps that were taken were missteps," Davidson told IndyStar, "and I think it put our community back."

The EPA is also supposed to involve the community. The guidelines suggest setting up mailing lists, telephone conference calls or hotlines, or a workshop, among several other tools.

But the EPA dismissed Franklin residents' request to establish a Community Advisory Group to discuss their concerns and to participate in the EPA's decisions about site clean-up. Instead it established an email update list — to which zero emails have been sent, Rhinehart said.

The OIG has said it plans to focus on recent communications in its audit, but the If It Was Your Child leaders said that would provide an incomplete picture.

"This goes back decades, when no one knew this site was in their own backyards producing contamination at levels high enough it could have been a Superfund," Davidson said. "Because no one told us."

Community can't minimize exposure

Kathy Carlson said that she never heard or saw anything over the years after the contamination was found, including when a treatment system was installed in the '90s or when the nearby wells supplying the city's water were shut down for contamination risks in the 2000s.

"I read the news and stay up on what's going on," she said, "and I would have been on that like a bulldog."

Actually, it wasn't until just five years ago that her family finally learned of the cancer-causing chemicals in the city. And it was just last year that her 71-year-old husband was diagnosed with plasmacytoma, a type of blood cancer.

When David received his diagnosis, the doctor told them that they didn't have to worry about it being passed down to their children — this cancer was from the environment.

He has received radiation and is doing well, but the Carlson family is not alone.

If It Was Your Child has documented at least 58 cases of childhood cancer — often rare forms of blood and brain cancer — in Franklin and surrounding towns since 2008. Both co-founders have had children with cancer — Davidson's stepson Zane, 14, is now in remission after a three-year battle with a rare form of leukemia. Rhinehart lost her 13-year-old daughter, Emma Grace Findley, in 2014 from a rare brain tumor.

The group is just now beginning to track adult cancers such as David Carlson's.

"We have not even touched the surface of what issues and illnesses may have been caused by this," said Dr. Mary Beth Hensley, a Franklin physician who is now being mindful of patients' diagnoses and to what they may have been exposed.

The main contaminants are trichloroethylene, or TCE, and tetrachloroethylene, or PCE — both of which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lists as known carcinogens, meaning they can cause cancer in humans.

Agency officials and the health department have continued to emphasize that it is unknown what is causing children in Johnson County and Franklin to get cancer, or if any specific environmental cause can be identified.

Rhinehart, who is in the medical field along with Davidson, said she doesn't accept that.

"We are willing to call something a carcinogen, but then because there is not an overwhelming amount of scientific proof, we can't connect it to cancer," Rhinehart said. "But no one is going to hand a kid or adult a glass of TCE to see what happens."

Still, because these contaminants have that potential — and they have been detected in Franklin's sewers and even in some houses — Hensley said precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships aren't fully established scientifically.

It is unacceptable, Hensley added, that she as a doctor had not been contacted by the EPA about the potential effects and to be watching for certain cancer diagnoses. The Carlsons' oncologist also had no idea or been contacted, they said.

Kathy Carlson said there are numerous things her family might have done if they had been told sooner: They could have had their basement sealed to minimize vapors coming in, as well as installed water and air filtration systems for the whole house. Many parents said they would not have let their kids play in the creek, or they would have had their house tested years ago, or they might have even moved.

Regardless, Rhinehart said, they would have had information to make their own decisions to minimize their risk and help find solutions.

"Maybe we would have had people paying attention a long time ago," she said. "And maybe could have saved years before getting to this point and saved some lives."

Begging for better

The OIG's audit director of land cleanup, Tina Lovingood, and Trynosky said they heard a number of items at Wednesday's community meeting they could take back to the EPA immediately with some suggestions, particularly around how the community perceives the agency.

Trynosky said that "some comments tonight were concerning," but she added it is important to hear from EPA officials about why they made the decisions they did.

In its statement, the EPA said it has provided the OIG with data, files and other information about its technical work, community involvement program and communications.

Rhinehart and Davidson both said they are excited that the OIG is looking into the situation in Franklin and feel that someone is finally listening to them.

"They were the game changer in Flint — there are officials being prosecuted from there on a federal level now," Rhinehart said, referring to the OIG's investigation of the government's slow response to Flint, Michigan's water crisis. "Most people don't understand the full impact of what this could mean, but I do."

Both women said they are frustrated that the OIG is looking only into potential failures in communication, and not whether the EPA actually failed in its response and efforts to clean up the contamination.

Lovingood said the OIG does sometimes audit actual clean-up efforts, but "this particular job is not that."

The OIG hopes to finalize its report by the end of the year.If the watchdog arm finds areas where the EPA has failed to effectively communicate risk, it will make recommendations on how it can improve.

Beyond suggestions for how the EPA could better follow its guidelines, Trynosky said the OIG will look to see if any policies or standards need to be changed or strengthened, as well as review the training on them.

The next EPA community meeting is scheduled for June 5, and Davidson said that will be a real litmus test for how the clean-up will progress going forward.

"To date, if we're talking about basic guidelines of communication, EPA has fallen short," she said. "We want it to be stricter so people aren't waiting years or decades for responses and information."

"So we hope they come in with a plan for communication with the communities going forward," Davidson added. "That's what we've been asking for and hoping for and begging for all along."

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