

Meeting Minutes

Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) District VII
Bennington County, Vermont

March 2, 2016 from 6:00 pm to 8:15 pm

Burr and Burton Academy
57 Seminary Ave.
Manchester, VT 05254

Attendees	
Name	Affiliation
Allison Strohl	BCRC
Emily Harris	DEMHS
Forest Weyen	Bennington Rescue Squad
Greg Gould	Winhall Police and Rescue
John Gagnon	Red Cross Volunteer
John Schmeltzer	Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Keith Squires	LEPC Chair/Arlington EMD
Konrad Stawicki	Vermont National Guard
Steven Schlosser	VT Department of Health
Tom McCoy	VT State Police

POD Walkthrough:

The LEPC 7 had a walkthrough of the POD, hosted by Steve Schlosser of the VT DOH. Before the walkthrough began, Steve did introductions with the LEPC and the VT DOH, and explained what the POD was and how the exercise will go on Thursday morning.

Meeting Minutes:

Keith Squires asked if anyone had any changes/edits to the 1/28/16 meeting minutes. Emily Harris had one comment - David Emery has a "Y", not an "I" at the end. Tom McCoy made a motion and Steve seconded to approve the minutes. All were in favor.

Treasurer's Report:

Keith explained that the Treasurer's Report hadn't changed since the last meeting. Keith said he will ask Lissa Stark send the report to DEMHS. Keith then asked for a motion to pay \$97.00 for food for the meeting. Greg Gould made a motion, Steve seconded, and all were in favor.

Presentation – DEC:

John Schmeltzer from the Department of Environmental Conservation came to the LEPC 7 meeting this evening to give an update and discuss the water contamination issue in North Bennington.

A few weeks ago residents started talking to their representatives in North Bennington about the Chemfab plant in North Bennington and how it processed similar chemicals to Hoosick

Falls, which has been dealing with water contamination in their public water system. Samples were taken from the public water system in Bennington and North Bennington and there was no detection, but some wells in North Bennington were contaminated with PFOA.

PFOA is pervasive, and is in all of us, but in higher concentrations it causes harm and is a known carcinogen. Those most vulnerable to PFOA are children and elderly. The health department determined that the safe level of PFOA in drinking water is 20 parts per trillion for the most vulnerable, children and elderly. In adults, the EPA determined that a level of 100 parts per trillion is safe.

The DEC is looking into the possibility of PFOA being discharged in the air. There were air emissions by the Chemfab plant. This is because there has been groundwater contaminated that is located up gradient from the plant. The highest concentrations found were approximately 40-2000 parts per trillion, and were found in a residential area up gradient from the plant but in the predominant air direction.

The DEC is trying to be as transparent as possible, and trying to answer all the questions they can, but they are still learning about this contamination.

Greg Gould asked if they could run town water into the contaminated area. John replied that it should be a possibility but they are still at the beginning right now and looking into short term solutions before moving to long term solutions.

Tom McCoy asked if anyone has received ill effects from drinking the water in the area yet. People in other areas with PFOA in their drinking water have had ill effects from it.

Tom also asked how long it lasts in the body. John replied that it stays 2-4 years but it can store in the fatty tissues and is a carcinogen.

Greg asked if there was a study done to compare the cancer rates in contaminated areas to non-contaminated areas. John replied that they have not done the studies and it is hard to complete because people move around a lot.

The DEC has offered to test the wells within 1.5 miles and they have gotten over 170 inquiries but some are on the outside of the 1.5 miles. They are hoping it is localized but there is no way to tell yet. The DEC is out working at night while people are home, from 5-9pm.

The DEC thinks they will have up to 150 wells sampled by the end of the week.

Steve asked how long the test takes. John replied that it takes 7-10 days and they want to get the data to people as soon as they can.

The DEC doesn't want people drinking the water and have set up two water stations/water buffalos, WB Mason also sent water.

So far, there are three known houses contaminated.

Carbon filtration are most likely going to be used to treat the water at each house with contamination above the standards, the other potential solution would be to connect to the public water system, but that will be more difficult.

The previous owner of Chemfab, Saint-Gobain, is a multinational company out of France. They have stepped up and have offered to pay for the water. The DEC has sent them a letter. In this letter the DEC is saying that they are potentially responsible for the problem but not blaming them and are not saying they are responsible, so by assisting, they are not admitting to causing the problem. The DEC also wants Saint-Gobain to do their own research to find out where contamination has gone.

In other areas where this chemical has been known to contaminate (in NH and Maine) they are finding levels of PFOA in fish.

Keith asked if there has been any history of the chemical in the air and the environment. John said there is a half-life of approximately 2-10 years but the chemical is persistent and water resistant.

John Gagnon asked when the contamination started. John Schmeltzer said he thinks the contamination happened over time and has been accumulating over time.

Tom asked if this was the same chemical as Hoosick is dealing with. John said that it is similar.

Tom asked if they think it was coming out of the smoke stacks. John said he thinks it's a possibility but they are currently in the observation stage, and are not ruling out other ways that it got into the environment.

The white building at 118 Northside Drive, used to be a Chemfab building, they have been receiving calls from former workers, they are going to look into it. Though that area is served by public water.

The DEC also received information about Cleveland Dodge, owner of the plant in Hoosick. They received information that he took chemicals to his home in Pownal and disposed of them on his property. The DEC is looking into this.

The DEC has been keeping the EPA updated and today sent a request to them for assistance, and to figure out what support they can provide. Warm Wire is also a previous Chemfab site on Pownal, it is now owned by Mack Molding. The DEC will be asking the EPA to step in to find other sites, such as the ones in Pownal.

John Gagnon asked if it was the unknown science or political issues that kept this from being looked into.

John Schmeltzer replied that this wasn't even on their radar till recently, and there are so many different chemicals that the EPA can't keep up. In ten years they could be testing for another chemical.

Tom asked how deep the wells were. John replied some were shallow and some were deep.

Potentially responsible parties may be digging wells to examine the bedrock and the other things to see how the contaminates move, but this is not certain.

Tom asked if any of these wells were tested beforehand. John replied probably not. But the EPA has been testing public water for emerging contaminants, and they haven't found any so far.

John Schmeltzer also mentioned that there have been PFOA findings in New Hampshire and Maine.

Greg asked if it was dangerous to shower in the water. John said that they recommend not taking long showers.

John Schmeltzer said that the DEC has received requests from Arlington and Pownal to have their public water tested, and are talking with the EPA to help assist with that testing.

At the VT DOH, the DEC will be there from 8-5 tomorrow (3/3/16) and Friday (3/4/16) to answer questions anyone might have.

Tom asked how much it costs to get water tested. John replied that it is approximately \$300, testing prices can vary though, this price was from a specific lab that is used by the DEC located in Wisconsin and may be related to the quantity they are testing.

Tom asked if it became a problem as soon as it leached into the groundwater or did it take time. John replied that it became a problem as soon as it got into the groundwater.

DEMHS Report:

From Emily Harris:

- Vigilant guard from July 27-Aug 2.
- In September, Bennington Rescue has an exercise.
- Bob Weinert is looking for LEPC members list by May 1st.
- The SERC held a meeting recently.
- On March 4th the subcommittee for HMEP grant funding will meet.
- New Website: <http://demhs.vermont.gov>. Let Emily or Rich know if you can't find something on the site.
- Springtime flooding seminar will be held in Brattleboro on March 17th at the Brattleboro Retreat.
- The state is looking at a learning management system where you could see classes, sign up, and get certificates all in one place.
- Trainings in the area:
 - Pawlet ICS/EOC interface
 - ICS 100 in Bennington (time and date TBD)
 - EMD training in Manchester on May 5th at the Manchester Police Station from 5:30-10:00pm

Agency Reports: From the VT National Guard: The National Guard has a company assigned with duties as a quick reaction force in order to support state and local authorities. As part of this assignment, they are required to conduct emergency response training and

exercises. It can be extremely beneficial to have training and exercises that are inter-organizational with multiple response agencies. If this is something that anyone from the LEPC would like to pursue, the National Guard asks that it be coordinated through Konrad Stawicki's office along with the SEOC. Konrad can be reached at: (802) 338-3429 or at: konrad.j.stawicki.mil@mail.mil

Adjourn: The meeting ended at 8:15pm.

Next Meeting: TBD