

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 6, 2009

Mr. Bill A. Roderick
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mr. Roderick,

I am formally requesting an investigation of the work performed to this date by EPA Region 4 on a hazardous waste site in Skyland, North Carolina. I am further requesting that an immediate reassessment of both the drinking water and the air quality of the area in question be conducted by independent and credible sources in order to demonstrate the safety of the area to concerned citizens.

Over time the public trust of the citizens affected by the site in the Environmental Protection Agency Region 4 has eroded. I no longer believe that the mission of EPA is being fulfilled.

The site was occupied for many years by CTS of Asheville. During that time CTS, an electroplating company, used large quantities of Trichloroethylene (TCE) as a degreaser. TCE, a chemical known to be harmful to human health, is now found in unsafe quantities throughout the occupied area and in neighboring property.

EPA Region 4 has been aware of activities on the property since 1980 when CTS of Asheville was first identified as a Waste Handler. After being notified by a local citizen in 1990 of potential hazardous substances in a neighboring property owner's drinking water source, EPA hired a contractor to identify and test wells for contamination. Although 397 wells were identified in close proximity, only one well was tested 4,226 feet away. The original neighboring drinking water source was not tested until 9 years later, when it was found to be heavily contaminated.

Despite knowledge of contamination on the CTS/Mills Gap Rd Associates property, the land was allowed to be broken up and developed in 1997 into Southside Village.

In the over 40 year history of the site many individuals in the surrounding area have become ill and died from symptoms that are potentially attributable to TCE exposure. EPA has a mission to protect human health. In EPA Region 4's over 20 year history on the site they have failed to demonstrate the safety of the area to citizens in the area and to hold the responsible parties to account.

In one of many instances, after a recent round of well sampling conducted by EPA Region 4, letters notifying citizens of the results were written in a way that not only did not convey the safety of drinking water, but led many to believe that their wells had become contaminated.

Most recently a previously capped well containing high levels of TCE was improperly sealed following the work of an EPA contractor. That well began leaking on Saturday, April 25th after repeated calls to both the National Emergency Hotline and the Region 4 Emergency Hotline, both of which failed to respond. The local fire department arrived and recapped the well. EPA did not respond to this incident until the mid afternoon of the next day. This lack of response is unacceptable.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and I look forward to your response. If you have any questions please contact Kara Weishaar in my office at (202) 228-2964.

Sincerely,



Richard Burr
United States Senator