Vallejo, CA
(Solano Co.)
Times Herald
(Clr. D. 26,674)
(Clr. S. 25,942)

SEP 3 1982

Allen's P. C. B Est. 1888

Contaminated land reports bring anger and fear to a Vallejo neighborhood

PCBs: residents just want answers

By MICHAEL McCALL
Times-Herald staff writer

VALLEJO — More than 40 angry residents of the Lakeside Manor subdivision met Thursday night to exchange information about a PCB-contaminated salvage yard that borders their homes.

Besides fear, the group shared one feeling: that state and county officials have neglected to inform them about how much danger they may or may not face because of large quantities of PCBs near their neighborhood.

"Nobody came by and told me anything," said Joseph Elliot, 58, of 46 Walnut St. "The state has notified nobody around here about what to do or what to look for."

Everyone present chimed in agreement with Elliot.

The first indication Elliot and the others received of the contaminated site was from a local insurance abitrator, Tom Howe of H&B Claims. Howe canvassed the neighborhood Monday to tell people of the possible danger



Times-Herald/Dennis Lee

LLoyd Murray and Tom Howe gather with other neighbors for a meeting at Chabot Market Thursday night.

PCB-ARCH-EXT0376145

Howe and his partner Rick Bordeau also arranged the community meeting Thursday night.

The contaminated site, an approximately 20-square-yard lot behind the abandoned Vallejo Iron Works at 227 Chabot Road, edges the 300 block of Pepper Drive.

Twenty-one capacitors and transformers leaking polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, were removed from the site Friday and Monday. The government banned PCBs in 1977 as a suspected cause of cancer, birth defects and other health problems.

The chemical had gained wide industrial usage as a lubricant and coolant in machinery before the ban.

Some residents were warned Wednesday not to eat vegetables from their garden by the Solano County Environmental Health Department. The residents say no other, if any, contacts by health officials have been made.

Questions filled the air in front of the Chabot Market as residents passed along what little information they have culled from newspapers and from each other. As they discovered how little is known, other than health agencies reports to newspapers telling them not to worry, their resentment and frustration rose.

"We were just getting to where we were bringing the house back up from the flood damage, spending all our money and everything, when this thing happens," said Lonnie Hunt of 318 Lofas Place.

Lakeside Manor homes were inundated by flood water during January's record storms, with many living rooms deluged with three-to-four feet of water.

Lofas Place and Walnut Street, although not bordering the iron works, is downstream from the contaminated site. Many residents fear the toxins were carried into their yards and homes with the flood water.

"The same smell coming from this (salvage) yard I can smell in my house, in the garage. It's coming out of the sheetrock," Elliot said.

Other residents came armed with other unanswered questions.

"What I'd like to know is why this stuff sat there for so long without Caltrans or nobody knowing or doing anything," said Leon Singleton, a Walnut Street resident. "I'm afraid someone made a mistake and it's being corrected at our expense. I'm also afraid they're lying to us about the danger."

The California Department of Transportation owns the land where the iron works is located as part of the state Route 37 right of way.

Stella Hunt followed Singleton with even stronger sentiments.

"I feel the health department should condemn the whole neighborhood if there's any chance of danger or it being unhealthy," she said, adding that the land owner should pay for the homes. "These are human lives they're messing with. And it's not our fault."

Dave Paiva, who worked at the iron works for five years, also

(See PCBs, page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

voiced some worries Thursday. Paiva, 27, said he was often immersed in a smelly oil while working among the scrap metal in the salvage yard. During one stretch, he siphoned 10 to 15 gallons of oil from old capacitors to use to clean equipment and lubricate a truck.

Since the discovery of PCBs, Paiva has discovered a red rash on his back and chest. A symptom of PCB poisoning is skin irritations and rashes, Dr. James Stratton of the state Environmental Toxic Epidemiology unit said earlier this week.

Dave Eubanks of the county Environmental Health Department said Thursday that soil samples from various spots in the neighborhood, along with some garden vegetables, were sent to laboratories in Berkeley to determine the extent of contamination.

Preliminary soil tests have shown less than one part per million of PCBs outside of the quarantined area. Inside the salvage yard, tests have shown PCB levels to reach 200,000 parts per million.

State standards establish more ian seven parts per million as danerous; the federal government sets 0 parts per million as the danger tandard.

Lloyd Murray, whose backyard ences abuts the former iron works, said he finds it hard to believe that the contamination level can change so drastically in such a small distance.

"I think the only safe place for me is out on the golf course," he said.

3407

PCB-ARCH-EXT0376146