

'Mixup' Over Dioxin Tests Angers Official

Completed From News Service

NSAS CITY, — Dr. Kathleen Camlin, director of the regional Environmental Protection Agency office, says she is furious at a mixup in which two Sturgeon, Mo., workers were not notified that their blood had traces of the toxic chemical dioxin. Dr. Warren R. Mulr, deputy assistant administrator for testing and evaluation for the EPA in Washington, said Friday that he did not tell the two workers because he did not believe the situation was serious.

It was apparent that there was no significant chance of any serious health impacts from the dioxin in the Sturgeon community due to the spill," he said.

Mulr's comments came in a letter to Dr. Camlin, whose office also was in the dark on the spill until they were made public Thursday. A total of 22 cleanup workers and Sturgeon residents were given blood and urine tests this week after blood samples last month revealed traces of dioxin in the blood of two cleanup workers. Results of the latest tests are expected mid-May, Mulr said.

Neither the workers nor state or local health officials were notified of the first test results and EPA officials in Washington attributed the mixup to a communications breakdown.

The problems began Jan. 11, when 20,000 gallons of orthochlorophenol were spilled from a derailed Norfolk & Western Railway freight train near Sturgeon in north-central Missouri.

Several residents complained of illnesses after the spill. One cleanup worker, Walter Kidwell, was treated at the University of Missouri Medical Center at Columbia after falling on the contaminated ground.

A test last month showed Kidwell's bloodstream carried the highest level of dioxin, 31 parts per trillion.

Kidwell said he had been told earlier that the test results were not known, although they were reported to Washington three weeks ago.

"I just lay there and worry about what the hell's going on," he said. "It's got me all messed up. I might want to have another kid one of these days. That's what's on my mind."

In a statement issued from Washington Friday afternoon, Mulr said the EPA was

running further dioxin tests on Kidwell and two unidentified persons.

"Certain dioxins are known to be associated with some chronic health effects, including cancer," Mulr said. "Therefore, any level of exposure to these chemicals carry some health risks."

He said that because of the low levels of the contamination, there is "little reason to be concerned about any serious health effects to the Sturgeon community."

Dr. Emanuel Landau of the Washington-based American Public Health Association, said Friday: "Part of the problem is we're getting duplicate 'blood' samples." Landau said confusion between his association and the EPA also caused the delay. An EPA official conceded that his agency had erred.

Landau said he has been assured that the traces found in the two men are not harmful. But the findings prompted the EPA to test 22 residents of Sturgeon and other workers earlier this week. Landau is a member of a panel advising the EPA on the long-term health effects of the spill.

Peace Corps, VISTA Seeking Volunteers

Recruiters will be in town next week seeking volunteers for the Peace Corps and VISTA.

Peace Corps volunteers serve for two years in one of 65 developing nations,

while VISTA workers are stationed in the U.S. The recruiters, in St. Louis April 21-28, can be reached at the Downtown Rodeway Inn and the Clayton Inn.

