

Lone Tree Council

P.O. 1251, Bay City, Michigan 48706

(Fighting for environmental justice since 1978)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25 th, 2006

CONTACT:

Michelle Hurd Riddick, 989-799-3313

Terry Miller, 989-686-6386

Tracey Easthope 734-761-3186 x 109

Kathy Henry 989-695-5348

GROUPS CALL ON MID-MICHIGAN LEGISLATORS TO LIFT THE SMOKE SCREEN

Misuse of Federal 1000 ppt Dioxin Level Increases Exposure, Benefits Dow

State representatives should stop misusing a federal 'action level' not designed for setting cleanup standards for the highly toxic chemical dioxin, charged several environmental organizations.

Groups released a letter today from Howard Frumkin, Director of the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The letter was sent in response to a request from environmental organizations for clarification on the ATSDR number, often referenced by Midland-area legislators seeking to weaken Michigan's dioxin cleanup number. The letter states in part: "...the concept of an 'Action Level' for dioxins in soils has **sometimes been misunderstood.**" The letter directly comments on the use of the 1,000 ppt standard in proposed legislation in Michigan. It states:

*"The 'Action Level' was intended to trigger consideration of various public health actions. **It was not intended either to define the need for remediation or to serve as a threshold below which there is no public health concern.** The appropriate application of the policy guideline is to **compare site-specific data to the 50 ppt screening level, not the 1,000 ppt Action Level,** to determine the need for further evaluation."*

Representatives from the mid Michigan area have repeatedly proposed legislation referring to the federal 'Action Level' as a cleanup standard. This should make clear that that practice is not supported by the intention of the ATSDR's 'Action Level'. The letter goes on to say,

*"As you cited in your letter, we understand that certain **Michigan state legislators have been referring to our Action Level in proposed legislation to modify the state cleanup for dioxins in soil. This is an example of how our guidelines have been applied in ways that we did not intend.**"*

"What many elected officials have attempted to do is absolve Dow Chemical for contaminating an entire region with dangerous levels of dioxin. Raising the "safe" level

to a non-existent federal level is shameful," said Tittabawassee River resident Kathy Henry.

"This should put an end to the continued misuse of the ATSDR 'Action Level' by Representative Moolenaar and other legislators who have tried to confuse the public," said Michelle Hurd Riddick of the Lone Tree Council. "This kind of misrepresentation does not serve the public interest. It just means more delays, more exposure, and more risk for the public while we should be moving forward with a real cleanup that is protective of public health. We can't legislate this problem away."

Environmental and community groups that have opposed attempts to weaken that state's protective standard for dioxin in soils include the **Lone Tree Council, the Ecology Center, the Michigan Environmental Council, Environment Michigan, the Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, and Tittabawassee River Watch.**