



TOXICS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2006

Green Purchasing Bills Pass in New York City!

New York City Council Passes Legislation to Reduce Purchase of Toxic Products

By Karl Breyman, Program Associate

On December 21st, 2005 the New York City Council passed a series of 5 precedent-setting bills to significantly expand the City's procurement of environmentally preferable products, setting new benchmarks for environmental health in New York City.

One such bill, Introductory Number 544-A, establishes standards for eliminating or reducing the presence of certain hazardous materials in products purchased or leased by the City. Specifically, the legislation requires agencies to avoid purchasing products that when incinerated, create dioxin or dioxin-like compounds. A by-product of burning chlorinated products, dioxin are among the most toxic synthetic chemicals ever tested, which can cause cancer and harm the immune and reproductive systems.

One of the most common chlorinated products is polyvinyl chloride (PVC). PVC plastic is by far the worst plastic from an environmental health perspective because it is dangerous throughout its entire life cycle of production, use and disposal. While the resolution does not explicitly

mention PVC, a supplementary legislative report regularly references it as a source of dioxin and city officials expect it to factor in prominently when the law is put into effect. According to INFORM, 90% of all persistent, bioaccumulative toxic chemicals leave manufacturing facilities, not into the air, water or soil, but in products. Clearly New York City's move is an important contribution to the global shift away from the use of dangerous and unnecessary chemicals.

New York City now joins a growing list of cities such as Boston, Seattle, San Francisco and Buffalo who have passed purchasing policies to reduce purchase of products that lead to the formation of persistent toxic chemicals. New York City's \$11 billion annual purchasing budget is more than that of New York State itself. This presents an enormous market shift that will help create an 'economy of scale' that will make safer products more available and affordable for everyone.

The New York City Council also passed:


- Int. 534-A provides for the designation of a Director of Environmental Purchasing to establish and implement environmental purchasing standards for the City.
- Int. 536-A establishes energy efficiency standard for products purchased or leased by the City.
- Int. 544-A establishes standard for eliminating or reducing the presence of certain potentially hazardous materials in products purchased or leased by the City.
- Int. 545-A establishes minimum recycled content guidelines for products purchased or leased by the City.
- Int. 552-A establishes a pilot program to test and evaluate environmentally preferable cleaning products for use in City facilities. 

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☞ CEC Mission Statement ☞

Citizens' Environmental Coalition is a statewide grassroots environmental health organization working to eliminate pollution by empowering people.

Our mission is to:

- ☞ Create safe, healthy communities, schools and workplaces through pollution prevention;
- ☞ Empower, educate and assist people concerned about environmental problems;
- ☞ Strengthen the connection from the grassroots to the statehouse and beyond and build effective coalitions;
- ☞ Promote democracy, grassroots advocacy and environmental justice to protect and restore our environment;
- ☞ Promote corporate and government accountability and
- ☞ Promote non-violent social justice values.

Volunteers Appreciated

Want to help the environment?
Have free time on your hands?
We would love your help!

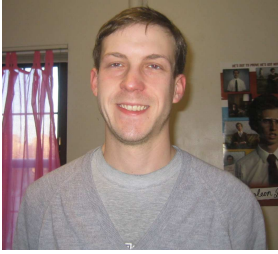
- ◆ activate members
- ◆ design publications
- ◆ organize events



In Albany? Call Matthew (518) 462-5527
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Next Newsletter Deadline: March 31st, 2006
Please send us your news & cartoons!

Welcome New CEC Staff



Felix Gottdiener (WNY Environmental Associate) is a recent graduate of the University at Buffalo and holds a degree in Community Studies (integrating Sociology and Urban Planning). While at UB, he worked with activist groups such as Students

Against Sweatshops and the Environmental Network. He also canvassed for NYPIRG for three summers, working on their statewide campaigns on such issues as the state Superfund and mercury regulations. Currently, Felix is focusing his energy on the West Valley campaign for CEC, working to ensure tougher cleanup standards at nuclear waste sites. His studies in planning and sociology afford him a unique perspective on the issue, allowing him to help empower the citizens of Western New York to make informed decisions about the direction of the cleanup. Felix's community outreach on West Valley includes radio interviews, speaking at college clubs, and tabling at area concerts. Felix is also working to arrange meetings with local officials to obtain funding for a Full Cost Accounting study investigating the different cleanups available. Alongside West Valley, Felix is also working with local activists to arrange an April conference that will bring environmentalists and the faith-based community closer together.



Lindsay Marlow (Office Manager/ Program Associate) grew up in Southern Illinois, and moved to western New York after completing her Bachelor of Science degree at Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky. In 2005 Lindsay graduated Magna Cum Laude with a major in Wildlife and Conservation Biology. While in college Lindsay

participated in intramural sports, Students for Social Justice, MSU quick recall team, several honor societies, and was the president of Murray State Empowerment of Women (MSEW) for two years. Events held by MSEW included a voter registration drive during the 2004 election, a women's film series, and the first-ever on campus screening of *The Vagina Monologues*. During her years at MSU, Lindsay also participated in a faculty mentored research program, conducting her research on the possible toxic causes of mutations in amphibian populations. Lindsay enjoys learning recipes from around the world, reading, and outdoor activities. She is very excited to have this opportunity to use her passion for the environment in a beneficial way for all of New York.



Matt Yaeger (Albany Office Manager) is a PhD candidate in Sociology at the State University at Albany, whose primary focus is Political theory and the Sociology of work and organizations. His thesis involves arguing for the adoption of a flexible work schedule instead of the current 5 day, 40 hour work-

week in the United States. Being in an academic environment has left Matt with plenty of experience working with people, meeting deadlines, and instructing students in the everyday social problems our country faces daily. In addition, working on his research has given him the abilities to argue and validate things he is passionate about. While completing his PhD, working for the Citizen's Environmental Coalition offers a good experience to use the knowledge and views he has to offer. Hopefully, Matt's addition to the CEC family will help improve the levels of success and accomplishments we believe are necessary to make New York State a healthy and toxic free place to live.

It's Time for the 2006

DIRTY DOZEN AWARDS!

Time to get the word out...

Is there an **environmental hazard** in your area that deserves statewide attention?



Who do you hold accountable?

Nominate them for the Dirty Dozen Awards!

Call 518-462-5527, email ceclaura@igc.org or go to our website for more information or to nominate a site

West Valley: A Call For Community Empowerment

By Felix Gottdiener, Environmental Associate

The history of the West Valley nuclear site is one of environmental oversight and community disenfranchisement going back almost 40 years. How did this happen? In 1966 the state strong-armed its way into the Southern Tier, acquiring 3,300 acres through eminent domain. Waste began coming in from neighboring states, and western New York was left to deal with the dirty laundry of our country's nuclear program. From the beginning there were problems, including widespread leakage and unsafe burial of wastes. In 1972 the Atomic Energy Commission shut down the original processing operation conducted by Nuclear Fuel Services. Asked to clean up the site, the NFS dumped radioactive material in nearby Buttermilk and Cattaraugus Creek, and buried drums of radioactive waste sealed only with duct tape. During this time, concerned citizens established the Coalition on West Valley Nuclear Wastes. New cleanup regulations prompted NFS to cut-and-run in 1976, leaving the state and the local people with a huge nuclear mess.

In 1981, Coalition pressure led to The West Valley Demonstration Act. This federal law provided a framework for a cleanup, but lacked specifics. The most dangerous high-level waste was to be cleaned up using solidification in glass, however, this left out the vast amount of waste not classified as "high-level". Since it wasn't specifically outlined in the legislation, the Department of Energy has held an "out of sight, out of mind" attitude towards the so-called "low level" waste. Along with the inadequately buried waste on-site there is also a plume of radioactive material (discovered by DOE in 1992) moving through the groundwater since the late 60's. This remains a major concern to local residents and the Seneca Nation.

The most dangerous waste was dealt with by 2002, but the community still has not seen a plan dealing with the other waste on site. A Coalition settlement in 1987 forced DOE to make a decision about eventual site closure, but the area would have to wait 9 years for even a draft copy of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to surface. Although inconclusive as to a preferred method of cleanup, the '96 EIS did identify troubling erosion predictions, since West Valley is on a glacial till that will erode into the Great Lakes basin [within 1000 yrs]. It is important to keep in mind that the waste in this area will be dangerous for tens of thousands of

years. Perhaps in response to this, in 2000 the DOE split the EIS process into two parts: waste management and decommissioning, and eventual site release. This obfuscates the issue, focusing solely on what is easily identifiable as "waste" and shrugging aside pressing contamination issues such as radioactive tanks used for reprocessing and the groundwater plume.

Despite the fact that the DOE has *still* not released an EIS for eventual site release (it is projected for early 2007), new federal legislation has come on the table that could further limit the ability of community members to demand a comprehensive cleanup. The West Valley Remediation Act, if passed, will hand the site over to the Federal government. The earlier state involvement in the cleanup (paying 10% of costs) would be effectively eliminated, giving the DOE full financial responsibility for protecting the health of WNY for thousands of years to come. The DOE has shown time and time again that they protect their own interests, not those of the people in the area. The bill must be stopped or altered so that it provides for more community involvement, not less.

The current situation in West Valley is not only due to the missteps of the DOE and NFS, but also the lack of power the surrounding area has in determining their own destiny. As a region, we must mobilize to demand the protection of not only our own health, but that of future western New Yorkers. What is needed immediately is a Full Cost Accounting study that will look into the long-term environmental and economic repercussions of the different site cleanups. The EIS prepared by the DOE and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority will only go out 100 years, not the thousands of years that will be affected by this waste. Furthermore, the DOE and NYSERDA have a vested interest in performing the cleanup as cheaply as possible; they are not the ones who will be affected by the ramifications of a sub-standard cleanup. The Full Cost Accounting study will provide an essential independent voice that will give the community the power to fight for its own health. Citizens' Environmental Coalition is currently working with other local, state, and national groups to make this study a priority for the State Legislature, and with your help we will finally end this shameful chapter in New York's environmental history.

For more information contact Felix at (716) 885-6848 or cecfelix@igc.org 