

News From NJ Senate Democrats

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TURNER/BUONO/SMITH BILL WOULD REQUIRE LOCAL NOTICE FOR HAZARDOUS CLEAN UP

TRENTON - The Senate Environment Committee approved legislation today sponsored by Senators Shirley K. Turner, Barbara Buono and Bob Smith that would require that local governments be notified any time a hazardous site remediation is performed within the boundaries of the municipality.

"When it comes to environmental contamination, time is of the essence in addressing the problem and protecting residents from health dangers," said Senator Turner, D-Mercer. "The fact that it took the Department of Environmental Protection almost six months to inform Hamilton officials that crushed concrete contaminated with PCB was mistakenly used to build a road at the American Metro office complex is unacceptable. Six months is far too long for local residents to be exposed to a known carcinogen without local knowledge."

"While it goes against common sense, often local governments are left in the dark when a hazardous site remediation is underway in a town," said Senator Buono, D-Middlesex. "As the problems with the Old Ford Plant clean up have shown us, it's critical that local governments are in the loop when such sensitive clean up projects are undertaken. Secrecy in these matters only can only endanger neighboring residents and businesses."

The bill, S-1711, would require any person who performs a remediation of a contaminated site to provide a written notice with the location of the site to the governing body of each municipality in which the site is found. The bill also would make the same requirement of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), when conducting a remediation of a contaminated site using public money.

It was found that dust and concrete waste created by the clean up of the former Ford Plant site in Edison contained polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that posed a health danger to individuals living close to the clean up site as well as the locations where contaminated soil from the site was used as fill. Plans are now under development on how to clean up sites in Hamilton, West Windsor, Brick

and Upper Ringwood that were recipients of soil and debris from the Ford Plant site.

"All too often, site contamination does not respect local property boundaries," said Senator Smith. "It's important for local officials to be able to pinpoint source pollution so that we're not unfairly charging innocent property owners for the mistakes of others. This bill gives municipalities in New Jersey enough notification to ensure that the polluter pays, and that environmental justice is done in the Garden State."

The bill would also require the DEP, within 30 days after the date of enactment, to notify the governing body of each municipality in the State of the existence of the New Jersey master list of known hazardous discharge sites available on the DEP's website.

The bill was approved by the Committee by a vote of 3-0. It now goes to the full Senate for their consideration.