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# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

*Executive Office of Environmental Affairs*

*Department of Environmental Quality Engineering*

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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

SUBJECT: Part A - Confirmed Hazardous Waste Site List  
Part B - Sites Requiring Further Investigation

### 1. What are these lists?

The Part A list are sites that have been investigated and are known to contain hazardous waste. The waste may have been spilled, abandoned in barrels or otherwise improperly disposed. In some cases these confirmed sites have already been inspected, nearby water supplies have been tested, and the wastes are being contained and/or cleaned up.

The second list, Part B are sites where further investigation is necessary to ascertain if hazardous waste has been disposed. These sites may or may not contain hazardous waste. These sites include a variety of industrial and municipal waste impoundments ("pits, ponds, and lagoons"), open and closed landfills. Most of these sites have not yet been inspected. They are included on the list because the possibility exists that hazardous waste may have dumped there.

DEQE has made no conclusion concerning the accuracy of all of the site information obtained from the various sources used in preparing the Part B list. The Department is not accusing the owners and/or operators of specific sites of polluting the environment. The list is a preliminary record of sites that should be investigated further. Furthermore, it is expected that this list will generate information on some additional sites that may not be listed here.

### 2. Why was this list prepared?

The Hazardous Waste Management Act (M.G.L. Chapter 21C) instructs DEQE to "conduct a survey, and prepare and publish a list of sites where hazardous wastes have been deposited or abandoned." This 2 part list fulfills that requirement and allows DEQE to accept local assistance in obtaining crucial information needed to assess these sites. This list will be updated every 6 months.

### 3. Why are these lists being released now?

The list took a long time to prepare. Even though we have very little information about many of the Part B sites - some on the Part B list have had information developed about them. We felt it would be irresponsible to release a list with just names and addresses. It also would have been irresponsible to wait until we could have looked at each site - if not impossible. The timing is a middle ground - we know a little about many sites but need community assistance to find out more.

4. From what sources were these lists compiled?

The Part A listing, confirmed sites, are fairly well known and have been discovered in a variety of ways.

The Part B sites, those which require further investigation, have been compiled from the following sources:

a. Surface Waste Impoundments in Massachusetts. This study, conducted by DEQE and funded by the Environmental Protection Agency located surface waste impoundments and identified their owners. Most of the sites listed in the Part B list were derived from the Surface Waste Impoundment Study.

b. The Eckhardt Report. This report was done by a subcommittee of the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee based on questionnaires sent to 53 large chemical companies. This identified 3,383 waste disposal sites nationwide, 54 of which were in Massachusetts.

c. Reports from DEQE and EPA

5. How long has DEQE known about these sites?

The confirmed sites vary in the time of discovery - however, most have been added to the list since last summer. The Fall has been spent compiling the list and doing a limited amount of field checking.

6a. How accurate is this list?

The confirmed sites are accurate. The potential sites may contain no hazardous waste. At this point, we are not sure which of these sites have or do not have hazardous waste. These are sites about which more information is needed. The list is as accurate as currently possible. However, we are assuming that there are other sites which we are not yet aware of. If an individual knows of any sites that are not listed here he/she should contact their local hazardous waste coordinator or DEQE's Regional Hazardous Waste Coordinator. (DEQE Regions & Regional Coordinators are listed in the report)

6b. Are these sites currently posing any health problems to citizens who may live near them?

The impact of illegal disposal activities on public health is extremely difficult to estimate. One of the potential routes of exposure to a population may be through their drinking water. Ground and surface water sources in the Commonwealth are routinely tested for 22 different contaminants under the Drinking Water Regulations of Massachusetts. In addition to these parameters, DEQE tests for other chemicals not required under the Drinking Water Regulations. Over the last six months the public ground water sources, serving about 93.5% of the people using them, have been tested for twelve organic chemicals under the State Purgable Organic Testing (SPOT) program. Of the 510 supplies tested, 507 meet state and federal standards; only three did not and resulted in the closure of municipal drinking water wells. DEQE expects to finish testing ground water supplies in the late winter of 1981. All water supplies in Massachusetts will either meet the standards set in the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act or they will be shut down.

7. How much will it cost to clean up hazardous waste?

The amount that will be needed to adequately address this problem cannot be estimated until the parameters of the problem are known. This year 2.8 million state tax dollars have been spent on cleanup of 3 sites alone. As costs of out-of-state disposal escalate so will clean up cost.

8. Have all of these sites been investigated?

All of the confirmed sites (Part A) have been or are currently under investigation. Many of the ones on the Part B list have been partially investigated by DEQE field inspectors. It will take some time, and much community cooperation, to gather all the information necessary to decide whether a site is a problem or not. The report issued today will begin a statewide cooperative effort to investigate the remaining sites.

9. When will all these sites be investigated?

The sites on the Part B list will be ranked and priorities for investigation established based on many criteria. One important criterion is the potential for water supply contamination. Investigating all of these sites will take time - a lot of time. In addition to having a limited number of staff to investigate these sites, track illegal dumpers, and develop regulations, we must still respond to emergency spills, fires, etc.

Because of the magnitude of the problem and our limited resources DEQE is asking local communities to assist in tracking down preliminary information regarding these sites. Local coordinators will be asked to research town records, talk to community members and try to ascertain what was, or was not, disposed of on the site.

10. How will DEQE set priorities for the investigation of the sites?

DEQE's prime concern is the protection of public health. Those sites which are near water supplies will be of primary importance.

11. What do these sites contain?

Investigation of confirmed sites has revealed a variety of chemicals - organic solvents, heavy metals, etc. Many of the sites will take further investigation before we know precisely what they contain.

12. Does DEQE have enough resources to investigate and clean up the sites.

No. DEQE does not have the manpower nor the financial resources to investigate and clean up these sites. We must rely on the cooperation of Local Hazardous Waste Coordinators to help in the preliminary investigation of these sites. The priority sites will be investigated by DEQE personnel in the order of their ranking. As far as clean up costs go, DEQE has a policy that where liability for a problem can be proven, those responsible will pay for the clean up.

13. Who is responsible for the waste being there?

In some cases, such as Industriplex 128 Woburn and Webb Park in Weymouth, wastes were disposed years ago by dumping into the ground as standard industrial practice. In other cases, barrels and waste have been illegally disposed of and criminal investigations to discover who is liable are continuing. Sites that are surface impoundments have not been regulated in the past and many are again the result of past standard industrial practice. However, where liability can be assigned those responsible will be ordered to clean up those sites.

14. Who is going to pay for it?

If a person or company is found to be liable they will pay for the clean up. If not, it will be up to the state to pay for clean up costs. Hopefully, pending federal "Superfund" legislation will pass Congress and help provide the states with the enormous resources needed. If the legislation does not pass other funding sources will have to be found.

15. What action will DEQE take against dumpers?

Improper hazardous waste disposal is punishable by a fine of up to \$25,000 per violation, per day and/or up to five years imprisonment. DEQE will press for the maximum legal punishment in cases of illegal disposal. We currently have 50 indictments against illegal dumpers.

16. When will they be cleaned up?

If a site investigation reveals the possibility of hazardous waste present, immediate safety precautions will be taken. These might include site security, removing highly flammable substances from the site, stopping any waste leakage and fencing the site to prevent unauthorized entry. Removal of all material at all sites found to contain waste will probably not be possible either logistically or financially. For most of this material there is nowhere in Massachusetts to dispose of it properly. Some containment of material at the site will be necessary. When containment is chosen as an option it will be done in a way that protects the public.

It is a terribly complex and costly problem. Until we know exactly what each site contains, and that will necessitate up front expenditures to scope each problem, disposal sites cannot be decided on. Not all the material can be removed from these sites. Contaminated ground poses a severe disposal problem. Since most of this material must be trucked out-of-state, enormous quantities of earth would be very hard to send out-of-state even if facilities were available to handle it.

17. How will we prevent future problems like this?

Three ways:

- 1) Regulation: The Massachusetts Hazardous Waste Management Act and the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act make it possible to strictly regulate the transportation, storage and disposal of hazardous waste. By requiring the use of manifests, the generator, transporter and disposer must inform the state

of where the waste is going - cradle to grave tracking.

- 2) Enforcement: DEQE has been working very closely with the Attorney General's Office to stop the illegal disposal of hazardous waste. Since the passage of the Hazardous Waste Management Act over 50 criminal indictments have been handed down. Every effort will be made to apprehend and prosecute fully anyone who illegally dumps hazardous waste.
- 3) Siting of facilities: Without New England disposal facilities, Massachusetts will be plagued by illegal dumpers. Secretary of Environmental Affairs John Bewick has made the siting of recycling, treatment and disposal facilities in Massachusetts the top priority of his office. Every effort is being made by his office to attract responsible disposers to Massachusetts and work with them to implement the new disposal facility siting legislation. Communities not willing to work to site a facility must accept the fact that without facilities, illegal dumping will continue.

18. Do we have any plans for utilizing resources other than DEQE?

We will need a lot of help. Not only do we hope that community officials will help but other state, federal and regional agencies will help. Each regional planning agency in the state has been asked to function as a repository for hazardous waste information.

19. What is EPA's role?

The Environmental Protection Agency has helped identify and do preliminary investigation on many of the potential sites. Additionally in many of the confirmed sites EPA has provided technical, laboratory and financial support. EPA will continue to support state efforts in this area.

20. How can local officials help?

Each local hazardous waste coordinator with a priority site in their community, after discussions with the DEQE regional hazardous waste coordinator, will be asked to begin a preliminary site assessment. Preliminary assessments will provide the necessary information to determine the potential threat to health and the environment posed by the site. Information needed to assess a site include:

- o a site history (use over the years, owners past and present, chemicals manufactured)
- o types of waste suspected on site
- o evidence of pollution
- o location of nearest surface water
- o direction of groundwater flow
- o location of nearest dwellings
- o location of nearest drinking water supply
- o type and permeability of the soil

This information will help DEQE determine the next steps.

21. How can the public recognize a hazardous waste site?

Some sites contain abandoned 55 gallon drums. Another sign would be chemicals lying in pools on the ground. It should be emphasized to the public that this material is potentially dangerous. If a citizen suspects chemicals have been dumped they should not go near them but should immediately contact the community's hazardous waste coordinator or the DEQE regional office. Under no circumstances should anyone try to obtain samples of the material.

22. Are these sites going to be posted so the public knows where they are?

Yes. If the presence of hazardous waste is confirmed the site will be posted. The general public should not attempt to visit those sites due to the potential dangers of chemical contamination.

23. If you live near one of these sites what should you do or not do?

If you have any information that might be helpful about the site please contact your community hazardous waste coordinator. Once hazardous waste has been confirmed the site should not be visited by children or adults until it is cleaned up.