



Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

Supporting Organized Voices and Empowered Communities Since 1987

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February 7, 2017

Governor Jim Justice
State Capitol, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25305

Re: Nominating Minden, WV, to the National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund sites

Dear Governor Justice:

The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition urges that you nominate Minden, WV, to the National Priorities List (as a Superfund site). As you may already know, from 1970-1984, the Shaffer Equipment Company, manufactured electrical substations for local mining companies and also stored unused and defective transformers on site in Minden. The electrical transformers and other equipment contained polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), a persistent toxic bio-accumulative substance. In spite of past “clean-up” efforts, the people living in Minden continue to suffer from a disproportionate amount of health concerns, especially various cancers.¹

According to the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ATSDR), “Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are a mixture of more than 100 chemicals which are no longer produced in the United States, but are still found in our environment... The manufacture of PCBs was stopped in the U.S. in 1977 because of evidence they build up in the environment and can cause harmful health effects.”²

Because of their chemical properties, PCBs in our soil and water pose a long-term problem to any living thing (including vulnerable human populations, especially infants who were exposed *en utero*) through ingestion of contaminated food (such as fish). PCBs persist in organic substances, like river and stream sediments or soil, though small quantities can be found in water. When humans consume fish that have been exposed to PCBs, the amount of PCBs bio-magnifies in individuals, and their body burden increases over time. Greater exposure to PCBs in food, soil, air or water, increases the risk of serious health problems linked to PCBs. PCBs are considered a probable carcinogen.

Health-related impacts may include cancer (numerous types including lymphocytic lymphoma, melanoma, cancer of the liver, brain, gallbladder, gastrointestinal tract and may be linked to breast cancer), suppressed immune and thyroid function, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, onset of early puberty in girls and decrease in testosterone levels in boys, increased respiratory diseases,

¹ <https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2018/01/this-town-is-so-toxic-they-want-it-wiped-off-the-map/> and http://www.fayetttribune.com/news/high-pcb-levels-remain-at-minden-action-urged/article_b9fee21c-a726-11e7-aceb-d73e209751ab.html

² <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=140&tid=26>

asthma, low birth weight, and decreased motor skills and cognition (ability to learn and remember) in infants and children whose mothers were exposed to PCBs during their pregnancy.³

The Fayette Tribune reported: *“The late Dr. Hassan Amjad, a local physician who was conducting a health survey of Minden residents prior to his Aug. 29 death, told The Register-Herald that PCB exposure had led to an increased cancer death rate in Minden.*

Amjad was collecting information to study the impact of PCBs on residents’ health and told The Register-Herald that he had seen a higher number of small cell myeloma cancer deaths among residents, along with what appeared to be a very invasive form of lymphoma. He was still researching the data at the time of his death.”

Recent U.S. EPA testing found continued PCB contamination in Minden, WV, and the agency also recommends additional testing to determine the extent of the contamination.⁴

Given the number of years that people in Minden have been exposed to PCBs (almost 50), it is past time for action by our state and federal government to provide permanent relief and complete resolution to this serious health issue. **We are urging you, as Governor, to nominate Minden, WV, to the National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund sites.** When Minden is added to the NPL, the U.S. EPA will then be given the authority to “assess the nature and extent of public health and environmental risks associated with the site and determine what, ...remedial action(s), if any, may be appropriate.”⁵

The Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) would like to be updated on any actions that you or appropriate state agencies pursue for the people of Minden, WV. Please contact OVEC at:

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OVEC

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Sincerely,



OVEC Executive Director

³ <http://chej.org/wp-content/uploads/Health-Effects-of-PCBs-Fact-Sheet.pdf> and <http://clearwater.org/news/pcbhealth.html>

⁴ http://www.register-herald.com/health/epa-admits-pcb-in-minden/article_da906dbc-af81-11e7-a115-7f8fd6ee425e.html

⁵ <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2018-01-18/pdf/2018-00619.pdf>