

EPA offsite remedial
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Jacksonville residents question EPA Cleanup, incineration at Superfund sites spark concern

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JACKSONVILLE — The mood was low-key Thursday as several dozen Jacksonville residents asked questions about the proposed cleanup of three Superfund sites during a federal Environmental Protection Agency open house Thursday.

The EPA announced earlier this week it was recommending that more than \$18 million be spent to clean up the Jacksonville and Rogers Road landfill sites and other contaminated areas located near the old Vertac Chemical Inc. plant site.

That announcement came on the eve of an announcement by state officials of a \$10.7 million incineration project in which nearly 30,000 barrels of hazardous wastes from the plant will be burned.

People walked through the Holiday Inn banquet room rented by the EPA for the event and picked up brochures, looked at maps and photographs of the sites and asked EPA officials questions.

Steve Gilrein of EPA said he believed that the most controversial aspect of the EPA's cleanup proposal was the recommendation that contaminated soils from the landfill sites be transported to the Vertac plant site for incineration.

"I think the people who live around the landfills will be

happy about it, but the people who live around Vertac might not," he said.

The EPA is proposing that a total of 750 cubic yards of soil containing more than 10 parts per billion of dioxin from the two sites be transported to Vertac and burned.

Lisa Cordell of Jacksonville said there was a city ordinance forbidding the transporting of hazardous wastes onto the Vertac site.

'I hate to see it burned in a residential area,' James Reid, a mayoral candidate said as he looked at some photographs. 'But the most important thing is to dispose of it. I'm for getting rid of it.'

Gilrein said those issues would be taken up at public hearings set for July 17 and 18 at the Ramada Inn in Jacksonville. Both hearings will begin at 7 p.m.

The public will have until Aug. 8 to comment on the plans. EPA officials said they expect the cleanup plans to be finalized in September.

"I hate to see it burned in a residential area," James Reid, a mayoral candidate said as he

looked at some photographs. "But the most important thing is to dispose of it. I'm for getting rid of it. Ideally, I would have liked to have seen a portable incinerator set up in a remote area, but I didn't have that choice," he said.

Ray Grizzell of Jacksonville said he thought EPA should "get on with the cleanup."

"They should have been doing this 10 years ago," he said.

However, Jere Guin Jr. of Little Rock said he had reservations about incineration.

"There is substantial evidence that the EPA's standards for incineration are insufficient," he said.

Guin cited studies completed at Brigham Young and Harvard universities that prove "incineration of normal stuff causes ill health effects on young children."

"The standards are insufficient to protect the community and it's irresponsible to continue with it," he said. "They should postpone it until they know more about it."

Cindy Westra, a wildlife rehabilitator from Jacksonville, complained to EPA officials that not enough studies had been done on the wildlife to find out what effect the hazardous wastes had on them. "The wildlife around here has been neglected," she said.