



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Glynn Environmental Coalition, a nonprofit community organization whose goal is to have a safe and healthy place to live and raise a family, brought several concerns to the Ombudsman's attention regarding the Hercules 009 Landfill site near Brunswick, Georgia, in EPA Region 4.

Background

Between 1975 and 1980, Hercules Incorporated operated the Hercules 009 Landfill to dispose of waste material from producing toxaphene, an agricultural pesticide. The site became part of EPA's Superfund program in 1984. Construction on the cleanup was completed in 1999, but some contaminants remained at the site, so every 5 years the site must be reviewed to ensure that the cleanup is functioning as intended and it does not adversely affect human health and the environment.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report and addendum, click on the following links:

www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2005/20050926-2005-P-00022.pdf

www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2005/20050926-2005-P-00022A.pdf

Appropriate Testing and Timely Reporting Are Needed at the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund Site, Brunswick, Georgia

What We Found

The testing method that EPA uses to monitor for the presence of toxaphene in groundwater is inadequate. Toxaphene degrades over time, changing into other products (toxaphene breakdown products). EPA's testing method does not identify and measure the amount of toxaphene that has degraded, only toxaphene that has not degraded.

The available toxicity data on the toxaphene breakdown products are not specific as to what constitutes a safe, acceptable level of exposure. Because toxaphene breakdown products may pose a risk to human health, they should be monitored. A different analytical method, one that monitors toxaphene breakdown products, should be used rather than the conventional EPA method.

EPA's report on the 5-year review of the Hercules 009 Landfill is over a year late, because

- Region 4 was gathering additional data to reduce uncertainty about how much toxaphene was present in the groundwater.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took longer to prepare the first draft report than expected.
- The EPA manager for the site changed twice during the review period.
- EPA and others made extensive comments on the draft reports.

What We Recommend

We recommend that EPA Region 4:

- use an analytical method that monitors both toxaphene and its breakdown products in the groundwater at the Hercules 009 Landfill and take appropriate action if toxaphene breakdown products are found.
- issue the report on the Hercules 009 Landfill 5-year review.