



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

Three members of the New Jersey congressional delegation requested that the Office of Inspector General “conduct an investigation into the history and continued inadequate characterization and remediation of the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund site.” This report addresses whether environmental injustice exists and if EPA employed effective community relations. Environmental justice is fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in implementing environmental laws.

Background

About 500 acres around the Ringwood mines became a Superfund site in 1983 because of dumped hazardous paint sludge. Paint sludge was removed several times, and the water was being monitored, so EPA deleted it from the list of such sites in 1994. Cleanup activities at the site resumed after residents reported finding more paint sludge in 2004.

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

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2007/20070402-2007-P-00016.pdf

Environmental Justice Concerns and Communication Problems Complicated Cleaning Up Ringwood Mines/Landfill Site

What We Found

We did not find evidence to indicate that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA’s) actions or decisionmaking to investigate or remediate environmental conditions at the Ringwood Mines/Landfill site were affected by the area’s racial, cultural, or socioeconomic status. However, residents living near the site continue to believe they were unfairly treated because of their racial makeup and socioeconomic status. Several residents believe their health was adversely affected by exposure to site contamination. Ringwood residents said that multiple cleanups at the site beginning in 1987, and a lack of effective communication with EPA Region 2, contributed to this perception. Additionally, residents believe that EPA is pursuing the current activity because of outside pressures. Region 2 plans to address environmental justice concerns by cleaning up the site.

Problems with communications and relationships impeded effective cooperation between EPA and residents. Although Region 2 has increased its community relations efforts at the site, the new community relations plan being prepared must address these impediments.

What We Recommend

We recommend that the Regional Administrator, Region 2:

- Address the Ringwood community’s perception of unfair treatment and concerns regarding completely cleaning up the site by ensuring that the new Record of Decision includes a detailed comparison of current and prior site investigations and cleanups.
- Prepare and implement a new community involvement plan for the Ringwood site.
- Help the community correct the deficiencies in the Community Advisory Group so its meetings are regularly held and productive.
- Increase communication with the community about Region 2 efforts to ensure that the Ford Motor Company properly performs the correct work at the site.

Region 2 concurred with our recommendations.