

**Follow-up for the Army Corps to August 6, 2004, questions sent August 12, 2004
From Charlie Bermpohl, *NW Current***

Response from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is placed below the questions
August 16, 2004

Mary Beth:

I need reassurance that the Corps has fully addressed this property - [address removed] - and the issues involved.

I'm told that ATSDR vacuumed the house. Was anything found in the air? Also told that the three members of the family were tested for arsenic and that all three were found to have elevated levels. Now, clearly, there's a privacy issue here. But also present is the public's right to know. And the owner did say an awful lot at a public meeting. I intend to write a story, but I want some straightforward guidance - or advice, whatever you want to call it -from you folks.

You found glassware - the 8 glass bottles. You say work was stopped while a Huntsville site safety officer inspected the bottles and said they were non-important trash. But a safety officer isn't the same thing as an archeologist. Also, a recent news story threw a cloud over the judgments made by a Huntsville site safety officer. Are you certain of the bottles findings? Also, was the owner of the property advised about the 8 bottles? Also, what gives with the timelines? June 2001 - arsenic screening shows elevated levels. September 2001 - soil samples shows even more arsenic, 17 samples being above 20 ppm. May 2002 - 8 months later - the owner has a physical reaction to something evil coming out of the ground. June 2002 - Parsons finds nothing. Winter of 2002-2003 - arsenic remediated. A year-and-a-half between detection and removal? Eight months, or more, between the owner being hit in the face with he thinks is Lewisite and your people getting the stuff out of the ground? Why so long?

Also, was there Lewisite in the ground? Privacy issues or not, this family doesn't exactly live in the boondocks. They're surrounded by other human beings.

**Thanks,
Charlie**

Charlie:

The timeline shows the work the Corps has done at the property. Note that it is not linear, it shows multiple things happening concurrently. You will want to be careful not to mix or confuse the separate issues when you write your article.

The property was screened for arsenic in 2001 along with all of the other properties in Spring Valley for which we obtained rights of entry. The arsenic-affected grids of soil were removed from the property in the normal course of the Time Critical Removal Action, based on several factors including degree of contamination.

The removal action was independent of the property owner's report of his experiences of a musty and slightly sweet smell, a slight burning sensation and a headache in late May 2002. MAJ Peloquin addressed the report quickly by having Parsons take samples in the area indicated by the property owner. The results were non-detect, which means there was no evidence of chemical warfare materiel. You told me, Charlie, that the property owner's description did not fit lewisite exposure.

It is one of the responsibilities of the site safety officer to determine whether it is safe to proceed with the work in situations such as the finding of the glassware. Items that are possible labware could potentially contain chemical warfare materiel or breakdown products, but household-type trash, such as shampoo or ketchup bottles, would not. He determined that the glassware was household-type trash, as was the other glassware the property owner turned over after the sewer line repair.

Regarding the tests conducted by ATSDR, here is a web site that may be of help:
http://atsdr1.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/springvalley/newsletter_0203.html. There are points of contact listed there.

Mary Beth