

EPA Response to Office of Inspector General Report Expected

March 2006

The EPA Inspector General (IG) released his report entitled “Appropriate Testing and Timely Reporting Are Needed at the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund Site, Brunswick, Georgia” on September 26, 2005, and recommended appropriate testing for toxaphene be conducted. The EPA Response was expected in December 2005, but a 90 extension was requested by the EPA to respond and the EPA response is now scheduled for release on March 22.

The IG report was prepared as a result of numerous inconsistencies with toxaphene analysis identified by the Glynn Environmental Coalition (GEC). Modifications were made to the EPA's toxaphene analytical method in 1993, and the GEC suspected toxaphene present may not be reported. The IG noted that the modified analytical method used was not effective for detecting degraded toxaphene in soil, water, and fish. The severity of the problem was demonstrated when 56 fish samples were analyzed and were reported as no toxaphene present. When more accurate analysis was done, toxaphene was found at over 52 times the EPA's "do not eat" level for toxaphene.

For the past 12 years, toxaphene has been analyzed in Glynn County by a flawed method. This includes sampling of neighborhoods, schools, and six toxic waste sites. Our goal is to have all areas sampled by the flawed method re-tested. At the top of our priority list is Altama Elementary School that abuts the Hercules 009 Landfill Superfund Site. Like the IG said, the previous method was inadequate, and we should not take chances with our children's health and safety. Other areas where the flawed toxaphene analytical method was used include the neighborhoods around the Hercules Plant, Goodyear Elementary School, 4th Street Landfill, T Street Dump, Old Sterling Landfill, Terry Creek Dredge Spoil Areas/Hercules Outfall Site, and the Hercules Plant.

The EPA's March 22nd response to the IG's report will answer questions about their willingness to do the right thing and use appropriate methods to test for toxaphene in our community. Until the full extent of the toxaphene problem in our community is known, steps to avoid exposure or plans to remove the health threat cannot be developed.

The IG released a second report, “More Information Is Needed On Toxaphene Degradation Products,” on December 16, 2005. In this report the IG recommended that the EPA adopt an analytical method that definitively identifies toxaphene and all the degradation products. In addition, the IG named 16 other toxic sites across the nation where appropriate sampling for toxaphene is needed.