

Specter asks EPA for complete removal of asbestos from BoRit site

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

By Thomas Celona
Staff Writer

Sen. Arlen Specter, D-Pa., has asked the Environmental Protection Agency to consider complete removal, destruction and/or recycling of the asbestos at the BoRit site located in Ambler, Upper Dublin and Whitpain townships.

In a letter dated June 11, Specter referenced a petition with over 2,000 signatures, informing EPA national headquarters his constituents believe there are better alternatives than capping the waste.

Specter addressed the letter to Acting Associate Administrator Joyce Frank of the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations. He mentioned possible actions the EPA could take as it enters the remediation stage at BoRit, which was added to the EPA's National Superfund List in April.

Specter conveyed fears from residents concerning remediation.

"It is my understanding that EPA is in the process of shipping dirt to the BoRit site," he wrote. "My constituents are understandably concerned that this dirt will be used to cap the site and have advised me that previous capping attempts have not been successful."

Instead of capping, Specter asked the EPA "to give strong consideration to removal, destruction and/or recycling of this waste."

"It is absolutely necessary that all citizens in the communities surrounding the BoRit site are assured that EPA implements a remediation that provides maximum and permanent protection of their health and environment," he wrote.

A representative from the EPA said the organization would respond to Specter's letter but could

not specify when the response would come.

Specter's letter came as a result of a petition organized by Citizens for a Better Ambler.

The group began collecting signatures in May, according to CBA and Ambler council member Judy Baigis. Members went door-to-door collecting signatures, along with going to public events and polling locations on the day of the primary election.

"You have to do a lot of petitioning on many levels to get anyone's attention," Baigis said. "The letters have to keep going out to the top people. We have inched our way up, rung by rung by rung."

Baigis discussed the importance of having national politicians bring attention to the issue.

"The site has been ignored for three decades now," she said. "This is something so big and beyond regular council members and even the borough management. It's a project all its own."

Specter's letter was sent just days before strong weather affected the area June 13-14, raising concerns about the impact on the BoRit site.

Ambler resident and Community Advisory Group member Andrew Salvatore visited the BoRit site on the evening of June 14, and he said he observed what appeared to be off-site migration and disturbance of asbestos waste. Salvatore compiled his observations and photos of the site into a report he gave to the EPA and the CAG.

Shortly after the storms, the EPA posted an update on its BoRit Web site. The EPA wrote while the weather did test the site, there was no impact on the Phase I section of the project, which is located along the Wissahickon Creek.

"We don't think that any asbestos migrated off site," said Eduardo Rovira, the EPA's on-site coordinator. "When we first came in, we put down fabric and then 6 to 8 inches of gravel. There was a good buffer between the waste and the surface."

However, Rovira said there is a possibility off-site migration occurred at other sections of the site, such as the Rose Valley area, where the EPA has yet to work and stabilize the soil.

URL:

http://www.montgomerynews.com/articles/2009/06/26/ambler_gazette/news/doc4a419ae573027629405198.prt

© 2009 MontgomeryNews.com, a **Journal Register** Property