

# MICHIGAN TOXICS WATCH

SEPTEMBER-  
OCTOBER  
1990  
•  
VOLUME 1  
NUMBER 1

• A PUBLICATION OF THE TOXICS REDUCTION PROJECT, ECOLOGY CENTER OF ANN ARBOR •



**A**t the headwaters of the AuSable and Manistee Rivers, Weyerhaeuser and Georgia Pacific spewed out more than 150,000 pounds of carcinogenic formaldehyde in 1988. In addition to Georgia Pacific's two area plants, the multinational corporation is in the midst of building a major formaldehyde-producing facility...

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- WHAT IS THE 'RIGHT-TO-ACT?'

# MICHIGAN TOXICS WATCH

September • October, 1990  
Volume 1 • Number 1

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Special Thanks  
The Caswell Family

The Michigan Toxics Watch is published quarterly by the Toxics Reduction Project, Ecology Center of Ann Arbor, 417 Detroit Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104, (313) 663-2400. Postmaster: Send address changes to Editor, Michigan Toxics Watch, Toxics Reduction Project, Ecology Center of Ann Arbor, 417 Detroit Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104.

A year subscription to the Michigan Toxics Watch is \$5.00. Send subscription requests to Editor, Michigan Toxics Watch, 417 Detroit Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104.

The Michigan Toxics Watch is printed using:



100% Recycled Paper  
(50% Post-Consumer  
Recycled Paper)  
Soybean-Based Inks  
Union Press

This newsletter is published with a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.



## IN MINNESOTA: FIGHTING TOXICS TOGETHER: COMMUNITY GROUPS AND WORKERS JOIN HANDS

by John Freedman, US Pirg

Community activists and a local labor union are successfully negotiating with Sheldahl Inc. of Northfield, Minnesota to reduce air emissions of methylene chloride, a probable carcinogen, and to eliminate its use as quickly as possible. Sheldahl ranked as the nation's 45th largest industrial emitter of airborne carcinogens in the 1987 toxics release inventory (TRI).

Contract negotiations between Sheldahl and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) last fall resulted in an agreement for a 90 percent emissions reduction by 1993 and a 64 percent use reduction by 1992. The agreement also makes the development of a non-toxic alternative manufacturing process the number one priority of Sheldahl's capital improvements budget over the next two years.

ACTWU has attempted to get Sheldahl to reduce worker exposure to methylene chloride during contract negotiations for the last eight years. Publication of 1987 TRI data by the Natural Resources Defense Council in May, 1989, helped to pique citizen concern over Sheldahl's emissions and use of toxics.

According to Richard Metcalf, negotiator for ACTWU Local 1481, the union was concerned that community concerns over air toxics might lead to calls to shut the plant down. The union sought to preempt future confrontations between the community and the union by including environmental issues in the new contract, and insisting that local citizens groups be present during pollution negotiations with Sheldahl.

"Before the contract, many people didn't have confidence that Sheldahl would reduce its use of toxics," says Eric Frumin, ACTWU national Health and largest industrial emitter of airborne carcinogens, led to the formation of two citizens' groups: the Northfield Air Toxics Study Group (ATSG) and Clean Air in Northfield (CAN). The new citizens' groups have been meeting with the union and Sheldahl over the last year to discuss implementation of emission control and phase-out plans.

Currently, the Sheldahl facility is applying for renewal of its 5-year air emission permit with the state Pollution Control Agency. In the process, the Agency discovered the Sheldahl was emitting thiourea, which had not been reported on available TRI data.

According to Mike Casper, a Carleton College physics professor who is active with the ATSG, the local environmentalists are investigating the health effects of continued emissions of methylene chloride and the release of

### What is Methylene Chloride?

Methylene chloride is a colorless volatile liquid with a pleasant odor. It can affect you when inhaled and by passing through skin. Methylene chloride should be handled as a carcinogen. Exposure to high concentrations causes unconsciousness and even death. Lower exposures can cause headaches, fatigue, unsteadiness and "drunk" behavior. Exposure can also irritate the lungs, causing a build-up of fluid (pulmonary edema), a medical emergency. Long term exposure may damage the liver and brain. Methylene chloride is not combustible but may form a flammable mixture with air. Poisonous gases are produced in a fire including hydrogen chloride and phosgene gas.

Excerpted from the New Jersey Department of Health Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet

The release of the NRDC report last May, which named Sheldahl as the 45th Safety Director, "the new contract puts the union in a position to enforce use reduction. The union acts as EPA."

TRI data from 1987 revealed that Sheldahl released 794,000 pounds of methylene chloride into the air. Sheldahl uses methylene chloride to adhere copper circuits to a base material. TRI data also reveals that the facility is releasing substantial quantities of methyl ethyl ketone and ozone depleting CFC's.

For the last six months, Sheldahl has significantly reduced its methylene chloride emissions by replacing methylene chloride with flammable substitutes that are being incinerated. The company has reported a "breakthrough" in developing a water-based substitute that it expects to introduce shortly.

previously unreported chemicals. The ATSG expects to get more stringent toxic release guidelines and Sheldahl's use reduction promises written into Sheldahl's new permit.

The Sheldahl case demonstrates the influence that TRI data can have on a facility, workers and the community. In addition, it shows how TRI data can not only lead to a reduction in emissions, but can also lead to worker/citizen coalitions in community-wide campaigns to reduce the use of toxics.

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# Labor and Environmentalists Join Forces For New Campaign

by Charles Griffith

**L**abor and environmental activists in Michigan are launching a new campaign to further the rights of workers and community members to reduce toxics and other hazards. Recognizing that toxic substances which endanger the lives of workers are the same substances which poison community residents and the environment, the two groups have formed a coalition and are embarking on a major toxics campaign. There are three central points to the campaign:

- 1) **Workers and Community Members need the Right-to-Act:** Workers and communities need broader rights to reduce toxics and other hazards,
- 2) **Reduction of Toxics:** establishing a regulatory environment that encourages companies to reduce toxics use, and
- 3) **Local Action is Essential:** laws alone aren't enough, we need citizen action to insure enforcement.

## The Right-to-Act

Growing out of the Right-to-Know movement of the early 1980's, this new campaign represents the next logical step in the march to eliminate workplace and community hazards. The Right-to-Act has been legislatively mandated in several Canadian provinces and Scandinavian countries, and is now being considered in New Jersey, where legislation was recently introduced that would significantly expand worker and citizen rights to investigate and inspect workplace and environmental hazards.

The New Jersey legislation is supported by a coalition of over 125 labor and environmental groups. It has several components which activists in Michigan hope to enact here.

- Hazard Prevention Committees within workplaces would have the right to regularly inspect the facility, investigate accidents, and negotiate to reduce or eliminate occupational and environmental hazards.
- Workers would have certain rights to refuse unsafe work.
- Community members would have the right to establish special committees to periodically inspect facilities with an expert of their choosing. Grants from a state fund would help pay for the technical expert.
- Worker and citizen committees would have the ability to look at the full range of hazards and attempt to resolve problems in a comprehensive

**WORKERS  
MEMORIAL  
DAY**

**RIGHT TO KNOW  
RIGHT TO ACT  
RIGHT TO REFUSE**

**WORKERS  
DEMAND THE  
RIGHT TO ACT**

Each year on April 28, the unions of the AFL-CIO and others observe Worker Memorial Day to remember those who have suffered and died because of unsafe workplaces. This year in Michigan, 1,000 people marched on Lansing to demand safer workplaces. Workers demanded their Right-to-Know be expanded into the Right-to-Act, that is, they demanded the right to refuse unsafe work and a right to negotiate with management about working conditions. The workplace is America's forgotten environment where each day toxic substances, explosions and unsafe conditions kill and injure more than 20,000 workers nationwide.

manner--perhaps outside of the regulatory process. To the extent hazards can be eliminated before violations occur or conflict arises, this may even help to reduce costly and time-consuming regulatory actions.

## Toxics Reduction

The Toxics Reduction movement grew from the recognition that our current fragmented regulatory system has not adequately stopped pollution.

The traditional regulatory approach emphasizes "end-of-pipe" control strategies that shift toxics from air to water, or water to land. Former EPA Administrator, Lee Thomas, once admitted:

*"It is entirely possible that somewhere in the country toxic metals are being removed from the air, transferred to a wastewater stream, removed again by water pollution controls, converted to a sludge, shipped to an incinerator and returned to the air."*

This approach doesn't attack the source of the problem: the use of toxic materials in production processes. The solution is pollution prevention, not pollution control.

Massachusetts and Oregon passed landmark toxics reduction laws in the last year. The Massachusetts law provides:

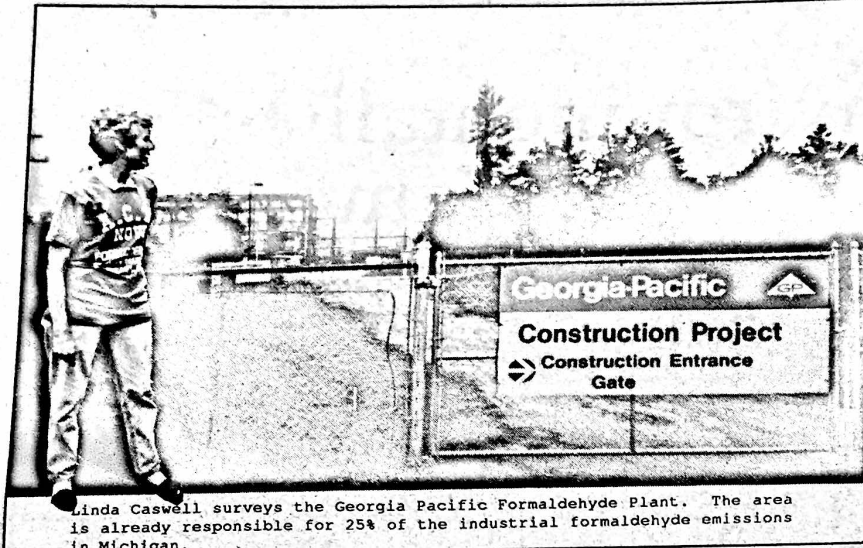
- a statewide goal of reducing by 50% the amount of hazardous waste generated
- mandatory toxics reduction plans
- a technical assistance program
- a research and training institute
- coordination between regulatory programs.

## Citizen Action

To be successful, 'Right-to-Act' and toxics reduction must rely on grassroots activism. Citizens and workers will have to demand reductions through their 'Right-to-Act,' and will need to force regulatory agencies to stress reduction of toxics at the source.

## Working Together: the need for a coalition

A key objective of a Right-to-Act/Toxics Reduction campaign is to break down barriers between workers communities, and environmental organizations at the state and local level. While the Right-to-Know movement of the last decade raised a common fist of solidarity among workers and environmentalists, this new campaign will strengthen that alliance.



Linda Caswell surveys the Georgia Pacific Formaldehyde Plant. The area is already responsible for 25% of the industrial formaldehyde emissions in Michigan.

# The Life and Times of Activist Linda Caswell

At the headwaters of the AuSable and Manistee Rivers, Weyerhaeuser and Georgia Pacific spewed out more than 150,000 pounds of carcinogenic formaldehyde in 1988. In addition to Georgia Pacific's two area plants, the multinational corporation is in the midst of building a major formaldehyde-producing facility next to their Beaver Creek site. Linda Caswell has been in the forefront of opposition to the facility, but it was long before formaldehyde production came to Crawford County that Linda Caswell was moved to take action.

## THE LEGACY OF PBB: SUSPICION AND ACTIVISM

"My first big scare was the PBB incident, that's what got me started" says Linda, referring to the contamination of grain feed with the fire retardant chemical PBB. That fiasco led to the widespread sale and consumption of contaminated meat and dairy products in Michigan from 1973-75. In the Lower Peninsula, 96% of all mother's milk that was tested had detectable levels of PBB (13% were above an arbitrarily set danger level.) In spite of official statements assuring the public there was little danger, Linda remembers her husband's caution: "Mike sells safety equipment so he has some idea of these things. He was concerned." So Linda fed her family powdered milk, limited other dairy products and drove to Grand Rapids for meat.

The legacy of the PBB episode in Michigan goes beyond contaminated milk and body tissue. The incident increased the general public's suspicion of officials charged with protecting their health. If there is any positive outcome, it may be the evolution of Linda Caswell as an activist. Linda is one of those who learned the actions of officials charged with protecting the public health and the environment need constant vigilance. Often those officials need to be challenged and made accountable to those they protect.

## EXPLODING OIL WELLS

Linda's concern with environmental degradation was further fostered in Saginaw as she saw how the pollution of the Tittabawassee and Saginaw Rivers forced the family to travel a distance to swim, and the stench of foundry emissions fouled their air. When Mike changed jobs and the family moved to Gaylord, Linda was looking forward to pastimes she enjoyed as a child. "I used to hunt and fish with my Dad, kind of unusual for a young girl, but I really loved it. I was looking forward to moving to an area where I could do those things again."

Gaylord proved to be another lesson in the need for activism. Shortly after moving, the Caswells discovered a capped oil well near their property, and learned the largest oil repository in the area was across the highway from their new home. The facility lacked berms or emergency provisions in case of fire or lightning. "The oil repository also had a huge pump. Every time the pump would turn on, the house would shake" reports Linda. The

Caswells feared for their safety. In October of 1976, an oil well 10 miles away exploded and burned for four weeks until the nationally famed firefighter Red Adair was called in to extinguish it. Linda remembers "at night our daughter could see the fire burning from her bedroom window. She was very frightened by it."

"at night  
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window."

Not long after the oil well blew, lightning struck near the repository across from their home. Frightened neighbors called fire officials, worried about an explosion close to home.

When Pigeon River was proposed as the next drilling site for oil, Linda could no longer remain silent. She sent letters to Governor Milliken inviting him to "come stand in my backyard and see and hear for yourself what it means to live with oil wells." She also called Shell Oil about the vibration from the repository near her home. Shell Oil responded by installing a muffling system in the oil pump engine which helped the vibration problem. Mike was transferred before the repository was eventually bermed and alarms installed as a result of their efforts.

## CHRONIC CONDITIONS

The Caswells lived in Grand Rapids briefly before settling in Jenison. It was there that Linda noticed a marked decline in her children's health. Linda herself had recently recovered from a battle with cancer and watched her health decline in Jenison. The Caswell family suffered from respiratory ailments, skin infections, inexplicable intestinal pain, chronic kidney and bladder infections and fevers. Linda's daughter developed asthma. After discovering an unusually high but allowable level of chlorine in the municipal water system (higher than levels found in swimming pools), the family stopped drinking water from the township supply.

Although, at the time, Linda did not know about multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS), a condition which afflicts some people who have been exposed to toxic chemicals, she knew something out of the ordinary was wrong with her family. She suspected exposure to chemicals was a possible explanation. The Caswell family drank and cooked with bottled water as a precaution for the six years they lived in the area.

When their children had grown, Linda and Mike Caswell used all their available savings (including their

retirement money) to buy a home in "the great pristine North. We wanted to get away from the dirty air and water because my health was not good, so Mike put in a request to commute, and they made an exception for him. We moved to Crawford County and were ecstatic."

"He said to all of us there, 'what are you people, communists or something?'"

#### ACTIVIST TRAINING

Linda quickly learned there are few pristine areas in Michigan and a new struggle began to take shape. All her prior activism proved helpful as the biggest fights were ahead.

Two weeks after moving in, Linda and Mike discovered plans for an M-16 rifle range on a wetlands area three miles from their home. They learned from neighbors that Camp Grayling had raised residents ire for a variety of reasons. Complaints included noise and traffic, but it soon became apparent that Camp Grayling threatened the delicate ecosystem of the Manistee and AuSable headwaters. Public outcry resulted in a DNR hearing. The base commander chastised the concerned residents who spoke. As Linda recounts it, the Base Commander questioned their patriotism. "He said to all of us there, 'what are you people, communists or something?'" After the hearing, Linda approached a DNR official to ask some questions. The DNR official bristled "I don't have to talk to you unless you have a fishing and hunting license." "Well fortunately you do have to talk to me, I have both in my purse"

DNR official: "I don't have to talk to you unless you have a fishing and hunting license."

Caswell: "Well fortunately you do have to talk to me, I have both in my purse"

"That DNR official is retiring in a few years," Linda reports, "but after that meeting I knew we had an uphill battle" More meetings about the issue followed. Linda drew the attention of concerned residents because of her strong presence and her persistence with officials.

#### 'FORMALDEHYDE IS FOR CADAVERS'

Linda was a natural coalescing point when in April of 1988, Georgia Pacific announced plans to build a formaldehyde plant in the area. "People were very upset about this, and Mike was worried about the base chemicals, not just the formaldehyde." Several people in Grayling and Roscommon urged Linda to form a group to fight the facility, including a Vietnam Veteran suffering from contact with Agent Orange. Linda was eventually convinced to lead the fight and held her first meeting "in the basement of the County Courthouse-no handicapped entrance but it was the only place we could get." Seventy-five people showed up for that meeting, including two TV stations. "People spoke up, it was like a catharsis for them, but they backed off when we started talking about action. In private, people told me 'Georgia Pacific promised us four years ago they wouldn't build a formaldehyde plant here' but they didn't want to publicly put themselves on the line against it."

"One of our biggest problems has been members and especially officers feeling a lot of pressure from family and friends to drop out."

From the beginning, the newly formed AuSable Conservation Trust (ACT) had difficulty maintaining membership and officers. "We lost some people when a high profile community woman dropped out of the organization, but ACT still turned out 30 people for the second meeting. One of our biggest problems has been members and officers feeling a lot of pressure from family and friends to drop out. We had such a hard time keeping officers long enough to get incorporation papers signed."

"The reality is that this is a company town. They control the jobs and a lot more too. People are rightly concerned about their jobs, but the companies' influence goes way beyond that." Georgia Pacific and Weyerhaeuser

## Good Neighbors Agreements:

### Citizens Negotiating with Local Industry

Across the nation community groups are acting on their own behalf. Frustrated with pollution control laws that don't go far enough, or frightened by the threat of chemical accidents in their areas, citizens have started to address the offending companies themselves. Community activism in the past has often been restricted to blocking the siting of new facilities, or closing a plant down. Negotiating with companies about changing their practices is another option. Groups presenting Good Neighbor Agreements hope to involve companies in a dialogue with citizens to negotiate directly about pollution and chemical accident prevention. Companies that want to be considered 'good neighbors' in their communities have a responsibility to sit down with citizens and negotiate in good faith.

In Michigan, several groups have presented Good Neighbor Agreements to local industries. For example, DuPont in Montague signed a Good Neighbor Agreement with Citizens United for the Environment (CUE) indicating a willingness to host a community forum on citizens' concerns. However, they failed to agree to the demanded reduction in the production of ozone depleting chemicals.

Downriver Citizens for a Safe Environment (DCSE) has been negotiating with BASF in Wyandotte. BASF formed a community advisory panel in response to their demands, but negotiations are still under way as to the authority of that panel.

The AuSable Conservation Trust (ACT) of Grayling presented five Good Neighbor Agreements to the following companies: Dow Aqua DeTox, the National Guard of Camp Grayling, Beaver Creek Georgia Pacific, Georgia Pacific Corporation of Gaylord, and Weyerhaeuser Corporation. Negotiating points included lowering toxic emissions, installing warning systems and developing emergency plans, addressing various citizen odor and other complaints, and committing to a policy of zero discharge.

Says Linda, "So far, officials at Weyerhaeuser, Georgia Pacific, and Camp Grayling seem interested in little more than P.R. They claim they are 'good neighbors' in the community but then they refuse to sit down at the table with us-- this is not my definition of a 'Good Neighbor.'"

## Activist Linda Caswell...

are also major community benefactors, giving to schools, the hospital and local groups. "Georgia Pacific only employs a few dozen people right now, but Weyerhaeuser employs more than 300. Some of the workers are concerned too, but they are afraid to lose their income. I know one man who may have fallen into a vat of formaldehyde. He got the message to stop talking so I don't know how he's doing now."

As in other regions of the country, jobs and environmental concerns are played against each other, whether or not the two are really in opposition. Linda has pointed out that the proposed formaldehyde facility will only provide four jobs in a County with a relatively healthy economy. "There is one businesswoman who has been willing to speak out against it. Her daughter is allergic to formaldehyde. She's alone in the business community saying, 'We don't need this thing.'"

"The reality is that this is a company town. They control the jobs and a lot more too."



The Caswell family models the formaldehyde plant campaign T-shirts: 'ACT NOW, FORMALDEHYDE IS ONLY FOR CADAVERS.'

"Finally, we had to deal with the fact that there was tension between people who lived here year round and seasonal residents. Seasonal residents are most concerned about preserving the natural state up here, but they don't vote. Local people want to work. There's also a tension between tourism (which means jobs), and heavy industry. This town hasn't taken a good look at that."

ACT took out an ad in the local paper opposing the Georgia Pacific expansion. One hundred people signed it at \$5.00 each. "Half of those names were teachers, which was very brave because the school board and superintendent were against it." Georgia Pacific was taking out full page ads every week advertising their new facility. "They didn't have signatures but they would feature pictures of boy scout troops enjoying nature."

In 1989, PIRGIM (Public Interest Research Group in Michigan) released a study indicating Crawford County had the seventh highest cancer mortality rate in the state. The report, *The Cancer Connection*, indicated 13 counties with higher than expected cancer mortality. "The people who wrote this were perplexed that Crawford County would be so high on the list. That's when we made our toxic waste map. Every group and environmental organization should do a map like this. It's a real eye-opener." What they found was a legacy of poorly handled toxic waste, and a plethora of active emitters. ACT needed to raise money, and they suddenly had a lot of problems to address. With

### Formaldehyde: A Common and Hazardous Toxin.

Formaldehyde is a commonly used carcinogenic chemical. It is ubiquitous in the average American household because of outgassing from wood and paper products in your home. It is a colorless gas with a strong odor, mixed in solutions with water or methanol. It is used as a germicide, an embalming fluid and in home insulation and pressed-wood products. Formaldehyde can affect you when inhaled and by passing through skin. Formaldehyde is a CARCINOGEN. Exposure irritates the eyes, nose, and throat and can cause skin and lung allergy. Higher levels can cause throat spasm and a build-up of fluid in the lungs, a medical emergency. Contact can cause severe eye and skin burns leading to permanent damage. These may appear hours after exposure, even if no pain is felt. Formaldehyde is a highly flammable liquid/gas and a dangerous fire hazard. Poisonous gases are produced in fire. Containers may explode in fire. Vapors may travel to source of ignition and flash back.

Excerpted from New Jersey Department of Health Hazardous Substance Fact Sheet

contributions from other environmental groups and a few benefactors, ACT sent out a mailing to the entire area surrounding Georgia Pacific. They also brought someone in from the Citizens Clearinghouse on Hazardous Waste to conduct a toxics seminar for 50 area residents.

When Georgia Pacific won permission to open their facility in September of 1989, ACT hired an attorney to file an appeal. The group went into debt, but was unable to fund a complete legal challenge. In June of 1990, the final permit needed for the facility was approved.

Although the group was demoralized by the loss, Linda and ACT have not given up. In April of this year, ACT presented Good Neighbor Agreements to five of the worst sites in their area (see box), including Georgia Pacific and Weyerhaeuser. The companies have responded by failing to negotiate with the group, but the tide may be turning. ACT has begun to get some positive media attention, and the group has gained legitimacy in the area.

'Do citizens dictate what's safe, or do corporations?'

"I think we have to ask questions like 'Do citizens dictate what's safe, or do corporations?' Who said I wanted formaldehyde in my tissue paper. I don't. And I don't think the average citizen would be happy to hear all the things corporations are doing without knowing how it affects our health. Why do we put dioxins in paper? So our toilet paper is white! I think if the average consumer knew the real cost of these chemicals - contaminated water, increased cancer, miscarriages, who knows what else - they would say 'no way, we don't need white toilet paper,' or 'don't put formaldehyde in everything in my home, I'll do without.' People just aren't given a choice."

Linda advises activists: "Plug into local government whether you like them or not, the DNR too. You can't afford to alienate them, or State officials. You're not going to win any battles anywhere if you have a lot of enemies in those places. Run for office in your area too. Seats are always available in local government. Get involved."

"It can be tough sometimes, and lonely. You have to be realistic and you have to harden yourself. Sometimes when a car is on your tail late at night, or your phone keeps having mysterious problems, you get paranoid. But I've talked to a lot of other activists and I've learned it comes with the job. You have to expect some harassment and unpleasantness when you're challenging people. Officials have treated me like I'm half crazed and self-serving. There's always rumors and talk. But I remember what an activist woman said when speaking about her struggles. 'I'm exhausted but I'm so mad I'm going to go on.'"

-Tracey Easthope

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### BOOKS

**FIGHTING TOXICS: A MANUAL FOR PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY, COMMUNITY, AND WORKPLACE**  
 Edited by Gary Cohen and John O'Connor  
 Published by Island Press for the National Toxics Campaign

After reviewing the prevalence and dangers of toxic contamination in our neighborhoods, this book explains how to organize your community; how to influence corporate business practices; how to obtain information on the threats in your area using the Freedom of Information Act, the new National Right-to-Know law and local sources; and how to work effectively with the media.

To order: National Toxics Campaign  
 37 Temple Place, 4th Floor  
 Boston, MA 02111  
 \$20.00 in paperback.

### A CITIZENS GUIDE TO PROMOTING TOXIC WASTE REDUCTION

By Lauren Kenworthy and Eric Shaeffer Published by Inform

What can individuals do to help stop pollution from industrial plants? This new citizens guide explains the benefits of source reduction strategies and provides a detailed step by step process for individuals and citizen groups to follow when researching local industrial facilities and talking with company representatives.

To order: INFORM  
 381 Park Avenue South  
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 Washington DC 20003-1107  
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### TOXIC TIMES

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**NEW SOLUTIONS: A JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH POLICY**  
 Published by Anthony Mazzocchi

To order: OCAW  
 P.O. Box 2812  
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 \$40 individual, \$60 organization/yr

### HAZARDOUS WASTE POLICY COMMITTEE:

The Hazardous Waste Policy Committee (HWPC) is charged with updating the state's Hazardous Waste Management Plan. The Committee is exploring three key areas: 1) how to encourage maximum waste reduction in Michigan industry; 2) needs for hazardous waste "capacity" and siting within the state; and 3) information and education needs of consumers, local governments, and small quantity generators.

In July, Committee members heard from Dr. Nikki Roy of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Quality, who discussed his state's one-year old Toxic Use Reduction Act and the DEQ's "whole facility" approach to source reduction. A sub-group of the Committee will be meeting again in August to begin developing its final recommendations.

The Committee will also be developing recommendations on the state's hazardous waste capacity and siting needs. Included in the discussions thus far are: 1) equity concerns over landfill size and location; 2) funding for potential host communities; and 3) whether there is a clear need for additional HW capacity within the state. The answers to these questions have important ramifications for current and future attempts to site HW landfills and incinerators.

The Committee will be completing its recommendations on these and other information and education needs in the early Fall, with a finished report available for public comment and hearings in early 1991. For more information on the Committee's meeting schedule call Melissa Luttrell, Office of Waste Reduction Services, (517) 373-0606.

### LEGISLATIVE WORKGROUP ON COMMUNITY RIGHT-TO-KNOW:

A bi-partisan workgroup, coordinated by State Rep. Kosteva (D-Canton) has been meeting throughout the summer to develop a statewide emergency planning and community right-to-know law. The primary intent has been to correct deficiencies in the federal SARA Title III law, including the lack of funding for Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) and confusion about enforcement authority at the state level.

Although the federal law has two main sections-- emergency planning for potential chemical accidents and reporting of ongoing "toxic releases" into the environment--most of the discussion to date has focused on emergency planning provisions. Those concerned with improving access to and use of community right-to-know toxics data may wish to get involved in the workgroup or talk to their local state legislators. For more information on the workgroup's meeting schedule or copies of the latest working draft, call Rep. Kosteva's office at (517) 373-5062.



## Ecology Center

The Ecology Center is a non-profit community organization founded in 1970. The Center serves as an educational resource and citizens' advocate on a broad array of environmental concerns, including issues such as solid waste reduction and recycling, alternatives to chemical pesticides and household hazardous substances, and community right-to-know. The Center has developed successful educational programs and city-wide services, including groundwater education, waste recycling and energy conservation programs.

For a membership to the Center and a subscription to *Ecology Reports*, the Center's newsletter, contact the Ecology Center, 417 Detroit Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104.

## TOXICS REDUCTION PROJECT

The Ecology Center of Ann Arbor launched the Toxics Reduction Project to empower Michigan citizens in their efforts to reduce toxics pollution and prevent catastrophic accidents in their communities. The Project provides citizens and workers direct technical assistance in exploring toxics reduction strategies, model approaches for local emergency planning, and guidance in interpretation and use of toxics emissions data. The project also works on model state and local policies that further toxics reduction and chemical accident prevention.

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