

Cleanup expected at 2 firms

By RAE TYSON
Gazette Staff Writer

Officials from two firms located near a Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corp. chemical dump have vowed to clean up contamination in their plants in line with recommendations from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

NIOSH officials confirmed Wednesday that dust samples taken inside the two plants, TAM Ceramics Inc. (formerly NL Industries) and Niagara Steel Finishing Inc., both located on Hyde Park Boulevard, contained trace levels of dioxin and two pesticides, Mirex and Lindane.

"Our current intention is to clean up according to a government plan," said Niagara Steel Finishing Superintendent James James.

"We are negotiating with a company to come in and clean it up," said John F. Kilpatrick, TAM plant manager.

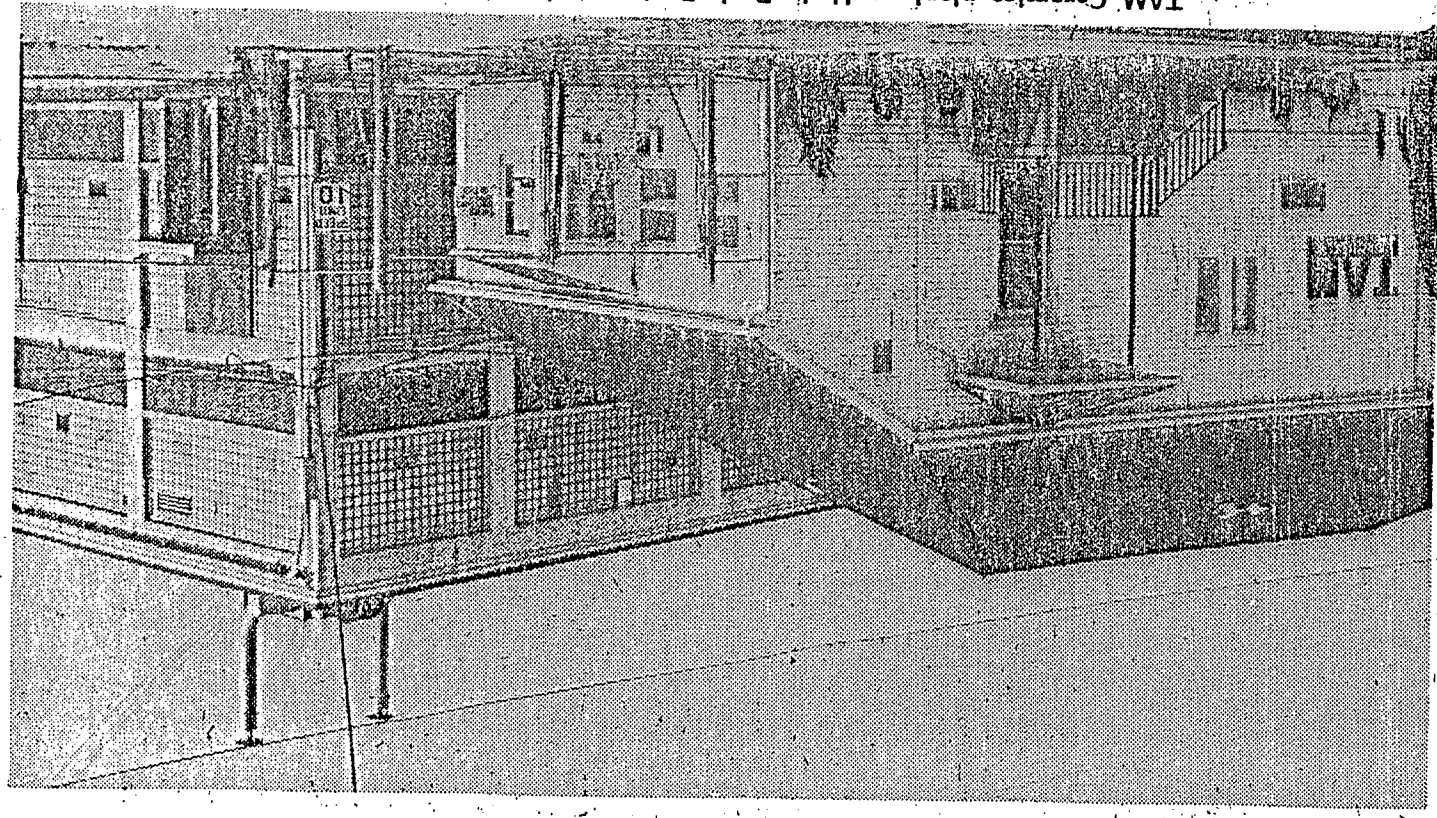
Both James and Kilpatrick said removing the dioxin-contaminated dust will have to be done carefully, otherwise the dust could be re-introduced into the plant air. Because of dangers associated with the handling of dioxin, James said he would wait for specific NIOSH recommendations before the firm attempted to remove the dust.

Dioxin, an unwanted chemical impurity, has been classified as one of the most toxic substances ever manufactured.

Kilpatrick said the firm had already removed contaminated sediment found in an elevator shaft by the NIOSH remediation team. High levels of Mirex and

Lindane were found in the shaft, along with unknown levels of dioxin and PCBs. "We had a professional cleaning company clean it in early October," Kilpatrick said. Kilpatrick also said the contaminated building had been sealed immediately following the NIOSH disclosure, and would remain shut until the dust was removed. He estimated the building would be cleaned and back in operation by the end of January. Union officials and workers from both plants said Wednesday they would press to make sure the plants were cleaned. "If the company doesn't do it voluntarily, we'll push for it," said Clifton Vanpps, Niagara Steel Finishing welder.

TAM Ceramics plant on Hyde Park Boulevard slated for cleanup



er and vice president of Local 8778, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union. Carl Sabey, a TAM union officer, said he wanted the building cleaned, but more importantly, he wanted something further done about the Hooker dump. He said the chemical dump received at most four times as much hazardous waste as the Love Canal. "I think we have a much more serious problem here," Sabey said. He also said he was working to form an organization of workers and residents in the area of Bloody Run Creek, a contaminated waterway that passes near the dump. "We have got to get that cleaned up for future generations," he said. Although positive proof is not yet available, NIOSH officials said the contamination came from the Hooker dump. Hooker officials earlier said it dumped a quantity of Mirex in its Hyde Park Boulevard landfill in 1976. Tests taken by Hooker and others confirmed that nearby Bloody Run Creek, which receives run-off from drainage ditches around the dump, contained levels of dioxin contamination in bottom sediment. Bloody Run Creek flows through a conduit beneath the Greif Brothers Inc. plant, also located on Hyde Park Boulevard, through a nearby neighborhood, and into the Niagara River. NIOSH and another federal agency, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also conducted tests inside the Greif plant, but results have not been completed.

Agency asks removal of plant dust

By RAE TYSON
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The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has recommended the removal of contaminated dust and sediment inside the TAM Ceramics Inc. (formerly NL Industries) and Niagara Steel Finishing Inc. plants on Hyde Park Boulevard.

A team of NIOSH investigators recently reported the presence of dust contaminated with dioxin and Mirex inside both plants. NIOSH also confirmed today the presence of the banned pesticide Lindane in those samples.

Data released by NIOSH, a federal government agency, confirmed the presence of the same three contaminants in a conduit underneath the Greif Brothers Inc. plant and revealed what chemical expert labeled "dangerously high levels" of the pesticides Mirex and Lindane in an elevator shaft within the TAM Ceramics facility.

Although the source of plant contamination has not been positively identified, a team of NIOSH scientists said earlier they were convinced it came from the Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corp.

chemical dump, which is adjacent to all three plants.

The NIOSH recommendations said: "No definitive assessment of the health hazard to workers potentially exposed to the settled dust containing mirex, lindane and TCDD (dioxin) can be made. However, because these chemicals are known or suspected of causing cancer and reproductive effects...maximum protection of the human health must be effected."

Gipp asks more creek air tests

TOWN OF LEWISTON — Councilman Joan Gipp said Tuesday she will request that the state conduct air tests in homes adjacent to Bloody Run Creek.

Because traces of the highly-toxic chemical dioxin were found in dust samples at two local plants, Gipp said she will ask the Town Board to write the state Department of Health requesting the additional testing. In late December, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health discovered dioxin and other chemicals during tests

"Therefore," the report continued, "it is recommended that NL Industries Inc. and Niagara Steel Finishing Company remove the contaminated dust."

NIOSH reported earlier that dust samples, removed from ventilation systems and overhead rafters, were contaminated. That dust, NIOSH said could indicate previous exposure levels for workers, although the long-term health effects are not known.

inside Niagara Steel Finishing Co. and NL Industries Inc. (now TAM Ceramics).

Air sampling has never been done in the area, according to Gipp. She said she is concerned over the possible effects on nearby residents.

Dioxin is considered by experts to be the most deadly material ever manufactured. The NIOSH research team found traces in the rafters and ventilation ducts inside the plants.

Gipp said she will make the request at the board's meeting Monday.

Dioxin has been labeled by the federal Environmental Protection Agency as one the most toxic substances ever manufactured.

The most concentrated levels of contamination were found in the TAM Ceramics elevator shaft. Comparing NIOSH data with previously released information indicate Mirex and Lindane contamination levels inside the shaft which are higher than levels found in sump pump samples taken from homes adjacent to the Love Canal.

In addition to Mirex and Lindane, NIOSH found evidence of PCBs in the elevator shaft sediment.

And NIOSH continued with its contention that Hooker's landfill was the source of that elevator shaft contamination.

"A sample of bottom sediment collected from a sand elevator pit in Building 145 at NL Industries (TAM) indicates migration of these chemicals from the (Hooker) landfill."

NIOSH recommended that TAM should "seal off or remove the contaminated sediment from the elevator shaft."

Dioxin found in dust at 2 firms

By RAE TYSON
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A team of federal inspectors has discovered traces of the chemical dioxin in two plants adjacent to the Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corp.'s Hyde Park Boulevard landfill, according to a report released Wednesday.

Dr. Philip J. Landrigan of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health in Cincinnati, Ohio, said a research team found traces of the highly toxic dioxin in dust samples taken inside the NL Industries Inc. (now TAM Ceramics) and the Niagara Steel Finishing Co. plants on Hyde

Park Boulevard. The investigation also included employees of the Greif Brothers Inc. plant, maintenance workers at Niagara University, and nearby residents.

Landrigan also said workers from the three plants were being exposed to "low levels of airborne organic chemicals, which appear to come from the landfill."

The NIOSH tests, which included testing of the plant environment and medical examinations of the workers, were conducted earlier this year at the request of union leaders. NIOSH representatives reported the findings to representatives from all three plants during a briefing Wednesday evening.

"We knew we were sitting on a time bomb," said Michael Wright, of Pittsburgh, Pa., a hygienist for the United Steelworkers of America.

Workers from the three factories attending the meeting expressed disbelief at the disclosures.

"We aren't anything except a new kind of guinea pig," said Greif employee Michael Dyer.

Although NIOSH representatives attending the meeting refused to comment on specific health hazards related to dioxin exposure, Landrigan made it clear he was concerned.

"As long as that landfill is there all of you

who live and work here are going to be at risk," he said.

Hooker used its 15-acre site for the disposal of an estimated 80,000 tons of toxic wastes. The Love Canal was closed in 1953. The firm ceased dumping operations there in 1975, according to earlier state reports.

Tests recently conducted by Hooker confirmed the presence of dioxin in Bloody Run Creek, which runs through a conduit underneath the Greif Brothers plant. Hooker has begun remedial work on the dump, and has promised to clean the contaminated creek once containment work is complete.

The NIOSH research team discovered the dioxin, which has been termed the most

deadly material ever made by man — in dust samples taken from rafters and ventilation ducts inside the plants.

"If it was landing on the rafters, it was landing on the people," said Dr. Mitche Singal, who conducted the medical portion of the NIOSH testing.

TAM officials attending the meeting said they took action as soon as they learned of the dioxin contamination.

"As soon as we had an inkling there was dioxin we sealed the building shut," said TAM representative Daniel Hurley. Dioxin was found in the TAM building nearest the landfill, according to the NIOSH report.

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Greif workers possible victims of toxic exposure

By RAE TYSON
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TOWN OF LEWISTON — Workers at the Greif Brothers Corp. plant may have been exposed to toxic chemicals in the past, according to evidence gathered by a federal research team.

The confirmation came in a report released today by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and raises to three the number of adjoining industries which have been infiltrated by chemicals thought to have migrated from the nearby Hooker Chemicals & Plastics Corp. Hyde Park Boulevard landfill.

Toxic substances, including PCBs, and

the banned pesticides Mirex and Lindane were found in an analysis of rafter dust in the building.

Tests of the air and sediment inside a manhole within the plant also revealed the same two pesticides and two isomers of the highly toxic substance dioxin. Mirex in the sediment turned up at an usually high level of 23,000 parts-per-billion.

In addition, the atmosphere within the manhole contained at least 17 other "fluorinated or chlorinated compounds...most probably originating from the landfill."

The manhole is an access point for a drainage pipe under the plant which carries runoff from the Hooker landfill area and discharges into Bloody Run Creek. The

runoff ultimately flows into the Niagara River.

Hooker used the dump for the disposal of an estimated 80,000 tons of chemical wastes between 1953 and 1975.

John Kominsky, NIOSH industrial hygienist, said the results followed tests conducted last December.

Earlier, NIOSH had disclosed contaminated dust inside Niagara Steel Finishing Inc. and Tam Ceramics Inc., two Hyde Park Boulevard industries also in close proximity to the Hooker dump. Acting on a NIOSH recommendation, officials from those firms have since removed dust from rafters and ventilating ducts.

Kominsky emphasized that Greif Brothers

workers are not currently receiving exposure because company officials sealed the internal manhole shut, effectively preventing the substances from entering the workplace.

Instead, Kominsky added, the information suggests that workers may have received previous chemical exposure.

"A sample of settled dust collected from the rafters suggests that airborne exposures to mirex, lindane and PCB's have occurred in the past," the report said.

NIOSH sidestepped any conclusion regarding the past levels of worker exposure, but noted that, "because these chemicals are known or suspected of causing cancer, and because they may become re-en-

trained into the workplace atmosphere, maximum protection of human health must be effected."

"Therefore, the report continued, "it is recommended that the Greif Brothers Corp. remove the contaminated dust."

Greif Brothers Industrial Relations Manager Thomas Minarcin said: "eventually, yes, we will follow the recommendation."

Although a NIOSH medical study of employees and residents living and working near the former chemical dump will not be complete for several months, an informal survey conducted by Local 12256 of the United Steel Workers of America last March suggested possible health problems in the Greif Brothers plant.