

**Hearing on Dioxin  
July 13, 2010**

**My name is Carol Johnston and I work for the Ironbound Community Corporation in Newark, NJ and serve as Co-Chair of the Passaic River Community Advisory group formed to represent the community in the clean-up of Dioxin from the Passaic River.**

**Thank you for the opportunity to address this body today.**

Let me tell you a little about the community I live and work in - the Ironbound section of Newark NJ

With a population of 50,000+, the majority of whom are low-income minority and immigrants, the area has few open spaces or parks. What we have in abundance are contaminated sites, legacies of our industrial history:

- One-half mile from two public housing complexes, we have the largest garbage incinerator in the state of NJ burns 1 million tons of garbage a year, half from NY City spewing out mercury and particulates contributing to high rates of asthma and other respiratory diseases in the community
- Heavy diesel truck traffic from the third largest Port in the US, Port Newark and Port of NY. Stand on one corner of a school and a major road like women in our community have done counting trucks you'll see that more than 100 diesel trucks pass by in an hour.
- More than 100 Ironbound locations on the State DEP's contaminated site register and
- The largest concentration of dioxin in the country, perhaps the world on the former site of Diamond Shamrock which produced Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.
- Diamond Shamrock long closed sits on the bank of the Passaic River which is heavily contaminated by dioxin. As a tidal River, the dioxin buried in the sediment is disturbed and shift location, particularly after heavy storms

In 1983 the then Gov Keane came to Newark to inform Mayor James that dioxin had been found on the Diamond Shamrock site

The role of the Federal government at that time, EPA e was largely to allay people's fears about possible health impacts. The community organized, brought in their own experts and tried to force Federal action. The community's request for action was met with the insistence on the need for more studies.

They told us the contamination was limited to the site, yet dioxin was found in a nearby pool and children developed rashes from it. Dioxin left Diamond Shamrock on the soles of shoes and the wheels of trucks. The Feds assured us they were studying the problem and not to worry.

Health advisories were issued in three languages warning against eating shellfish and fish from the River. That was more than 25 years ago. Today the advisories are still in effect. In the early 1970s, EPA officials discussed dioxin contamination at Diamond Shamrocks. Health effects on workers at the plant were reported as early as the 1960s. Medical study reported in 1964 that workers had chlor acne and liver damage. Subsequently the company representing Diamond Shamrock settled legal claims with a number of workers.

After further studies in 2000 work began on the property of Diamond Shamrock to create an interim remedy for the dioxin buried in the soil. Work was completed in early 2000, almost 20 years after dioxin was first reported.

I cannot tell you how encouraging it is to the Ironbound community to see the strong leadership role being played by the Federal government, the EPA today with respect to dioxin.

The science is clear; dioxin is a known carcinogen that has destroyed the health of many people in our community and other countries around the country.

We applaud the action of the EPA in finalizing and releasing its response to the National Academies report on dioxin.

So much time has been lost. We urge you to complete the EPA's Science Advisory Board dioxin review. We look forward to EPA finalizing the Dioxin Reassessment and moving forward to protect the health of Americans from this carcinogen.

The cleanup of dioxin from the Passaic River itself is beginning. More than a quarter of a century after we were notified that dioxin was in the ground and in the water by Diamond Shamrock. We look forward to the day when once again the mighty Passaic is swim able and fishable.

A quarter of a century is too long. Let's meet EPA's 2010 deadline for releasing the Dioxin Reassessment.

Thank you for your consideration.