

From: Randy_Merchant@doh.state.fl.us
To: Anthony_Dennis@doh.state.fl.us; Miller.Scott@epamail.epa.gov; Kelsey.Helton@dep.state.fl.us; [John Mousa](#)
Subject: FW: Koppers 101: Canaries in the Coal Mine (Part 4 of 5)
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FYI. Randy

From: Grimm, Lu S
Sent: Wednesday, October 27, 2010 9:52 AM
To: Merchant, E Randy; Grimm, Lu S; Krause, David; Goff, Kendra F; Watkins, Sharon M; Nair, Anil S; Blackmore, Carina; Conti, Lisa
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<http://protectgainesville.org/2010/organizing-team/community-involvement/koppers-101-canaries-coal-part-4-5/#more-1564>

Koppers 101: Canaries in the Coal Mine (Part 4 of 5)

Posted by [Jen Cotter](#) on Friday, October 15th 2010

via [The Bipartisan Victory Garden](#)



Last week, the Department of Health finally distributed brochures suggesting that Stephen Foster residents limit their gardening to raised beds. Small children who are prone to putting their fingers in their mouths are cautioned against playing in easements along the Koppers property, where dioxin levels in the soil are the highest. (Photo from Florida Organic Growers)

You'd have thought he was applying to work for NASA, what with all the attention they paid to his medical history. But the agency approved of him and Riley got the job. And he was good at it. Really good.

But a year in, his health deteriorated. Doctors put him on thyroid medication. Within a few years, he was forced into early retirement.

His replacement: a gorgeous red head. A golden retriever named Forbes.

"He does all my financial planning. He's good with stocks. Not so good with mutual funds." Anne Lowry is joking, of course. Both her service dogs are trained to help her get up and down from chairs, and move safely from room to room. Anne has Multiple Sclerosis. She, and then Riley, were diagnosed with their respective autoimmune disease and disorder during the first ten years they lived across the street from the western property border of the Koppers wood treating facility.

"I used to smell the fresh cut wood in the morning, I loved that smell," Lowry remembers.

Other smells had bothered her neighbors for several decades.

In 1982, W. J. Baldwin, the Manager of Regulatory Affairs for Koppers, Inc. had his burning permit denied by the West Virginia Air Pollution control commission. In fact, the commission ordered a cease and desist on Koppers' waste burning practices altogether. They advised that emissions tested from their boiler included "hexachlorodibenzo-p-dioxins and other CDD's . . . the most potent toxic substances known; they are carcinogenic, teratogenic, fetogenic, embryotoxic, and are acute toxicants with observable physiological effects."

The permit application had included schematics for the wood burning boiler located at the Gainesville facility. Despite the cease and desist from West Virginia authorities, Koppers continued to pursue burning permits in Florida. And in the meantime, they continued to burn.

A desperate generation of chronically ill residents from the Stephen Foster Neighborhood have asked the local Department of Health to request that EPA look into the matter of airborne contamination related to the Koppers Superfund site. EPA finally ordered an air modeling analysis to be performed on the Koppers site, which began its manufacturing of pressure treated wood for utility polls and railroad ties in 1911. The modeling attempted to paint a picture of the contamination that might have wafted over from the facility in

the form of "fugitive dust." Specifically, it accounted for truck tires kicking up dust on the property's dirt roads, an event that scientists can replicate and measure. Of course, these efforts were made three decades after citizens began lodging complaints with the Department of Health, reporting noxious odors - "a foul burning smell" - coming from the site. Data from the air modeling - analyzing truck tire dust - suggested there was no cause for concern. EPA was relieved. SF residents? Not so much.

There are some questions science can't answer.

Lowry continues to wonder if her MS was caused from inhalation of dioxins into her bloodstream. Her doctors think it was.

Gary Massey wondered, too. He developed MS over the years he worked at his car dealership, Massey Chevrolet, which was adjacent to the Cabot/Koppers site. He filed a lawsuit against both companies.

Linda Andreson was on the jury of Massey's civil case, which was unanimous in their finding that there was no *evidence* that Koppers or Cabot were responsible for Massey's condition. "I'm a die in the wool environmentalist. I wanted to catch them at something if I could. The majority of people on the jury were disgusted with what they *were* responsible for. But there was no way to get them on [the charges]," says Andreson.

If everyone in the neighborhood had MS, would it make a difference? Nope. The health department has to work with data: data collected locally, and data used for comparison. In the case of multiple sclerosis, there is no data for comparison. MS is not a "reportable disease." When a doctor diagnoses MS, they don't report that disease to federal, state or local health officials. If it's not a reportable disease, DOH can't study it.

What they can study is cancer. Cancer is reportable. In humans, at least.

What about cancer in dogs? Nope. Just humans.

What if every dog in the neighborhood had cancer, would it make a difference? Nope. There's no data for dogs in other neighborhoods to compare it to.

Maria Parsons doesn't care much for the DOH or EPA. She cares for her neighbors. She's organized all the people she knows who have pets with cancers. They get together once in a while, with the animals who feel up to walking. She's had all the pet owners sign a Paw Print Petition. It might never have scientific merit, but the 50 people who have signed it represent pet owners who think the neighborhood epidemic of pet cancers is an outrage.

Lacking any means to quantify the contaminated smoke and ash that drifted over the neighborhood over the past three decades, falling into lungs and bloodstreams, the EPA does what it can: they test residential soils for dioxins. They will not test inside homes. When the soil testing is done, they will have "delineated" the site, and the human cancer study will begin.

Before she had to leave her job on permanent disability, Anne Lowry worked at a hospital as a director of nursing, and then as a director of investigational drug studies. She claims to know how medical studies are supposed to be done. "You don't hand out a piece of paper at a meeting that says 'What's your name, what's your address. Do you have cancer? Where is it?'"

She's referring to a form that was brought to a neighborhood association meeting by Anthony Dennis. Dennis is the Environmental Health Director for Alachua County Health Department. He is not a toxicologist, nor an epidemiologist. He's made that very clear at recent public meetings where he has been asked to contribute suggestions for improving EPA's proposed cleanup plan for the Koppers site. Dennis says the paper that was handed out was not meant to be the cancer study itself, but a preliminary form - a way of building up a database of people who might be candidates for the cancer study. Apparently that wasn't well communicated.

Lowry isn't the only person put off by Dennis' presentations. He aggravated the fire out of me when I heard him say "DOH doesn't expect to find any cancer clusters in the neighborhood." Dioxin levels in the soils may not be alarming. But when the DOH has no way of quantifying the effects of all those years of smoke inhalation - I don't want to hear one word about what they do or don't expect to find in a cancer study.