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COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
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**STATE LAUNCHES DETAILED INVESTIGATION OF
HAZARDOUS WASTE FOUND IN BUTLER**

*DEP Schedules Public Meeting to Discuss Findings in Kaufman Drive Neighborhood; Site
Previously Used as Franklin Glass Factory, Waste Areas*

MEADVILLE – The Department of Environmental Protection will be working with residents and local agencies after high concentrations of arsenic were found in soil in the Kaufman Drive area of Butler that includes Franklin Court Apartments and Father Marinaro Park, a recreational area containing athletic fields and a skate park.

In April, DEP staff following up on a permit application for the Butler/Freeport Rails-to-Trails Project noticed suspicious-looking soil throughout the area and collected a soil sample. Lab results showed an elevated level of arsenic, prompting DEP to return on April 27 to collect 11 more samples from a number of points in the neighborhood.

“The confirmed lab results all reflected arsenic levels above the standard that Pennsylvania uses for residential areas,” said DEP Regional Director Kelly Burch. “We contacted the Department of Health to help us evaluate the sample results and better understand the potential ramifications of this discovery to human health. It’s important to note that the collected samples were gathered from an area that covers a number of acres and that our findings do not represent a complete study. However, the results do indicate the need for public notification and the implementation of a comprehensive sampling plan.”

The area is served by a public water system, so there is no concern with contamination of drinking water wells. The major concern is arsenic in the soil that might become airborne when disturbed and swallowed. Exposure to arsenic has been linked to respiratory and skin irritation and a potential increase in the risk of cancer and cardiovascular disease.

Burch noted that staff from DEP will be available to meet informally with the public to discuss the situation on Wednesday, May 6, from 2:30 – 7 p.m. at the Center Avenue School Auditorium, 102 Lincoln Ave., Butler. The school requests that visitors use the Lincoln Avenue entrance.

“The Department of Health has agreed to conduct a health risk assessment study,” Burch said. “The goal is to determine the exposure of residents and those using the recreational facilities at Father Marinaro Park and to gauge the potential impact of that exposure. In addition, we have contacted the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of the Butler County and the City of Butler to gain information on how the nearby homes and park were developed and constructed.”

Preliminary information that DEP has collected indicates that a former glass production facility, Franklin Glass, operated on the site from the 1930s through the mid- to late-1960. Arsenic was widely used throughout the industry as an agent to remove bubbles and color and would have been part of the waste stream. Disposing waste materials or sludge into lagoons was a common practice in the glass industry during that period.

Aerial photographs DEP obtained indicate there were two lagoons and another waste area in addition to the Franklin Glass production facility that covered about 30 acres along Coal Run. It appears that housing was built on some of the former industrial property. At this time, DEP is

pursuing information on environmental assessment studies that might have been done at the property prior to its development.

“As we develop information, DEP and DOH will update residents and the rest of the community about our findings,” Burch said. “We intend to establish an information repository in the neighborhood so residents will have convenient access to files and records related to the investigation. In addition, we will create a place on our Web site so information will be available online.”

The DEP investigation is being carried out through the Hazardous Site Cleanup Fund, which enables the commonwealth to address contaminated sites while pursuing responsible parties to reimburse any or all of the costs.

For more information on the Hazardous Sites Cleanup program, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: HSCA.

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