

# Petition: Schlumberger has history of environmental problems

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An Ithaca-based environmental firm has presented a petition to Horseheads village planners that requests a full environmental impact study for the Schlumberger gas drilling support facility proposed for an 88-acre parcel near Wygant and Ridge roads.

The petition, e-mailed Monday to the village by Toxics Targeting Inc., includes the names of more than 60 residents primarily from the Horseheads and Elmira area who support the request, environmental data, a map showing more than 80 toxic spills or accidents that have taken place over the years within a quarter-mile radius of the proposed site, and federal records that document Schlumberger's environmental regulatory non-compliance at five of its facilities.

One site in particular -- a 10-acre facility in Evansville, Wyo., similar to what is being proposed for Horseheads and operated by Dowell/Schlumberger -- has been identified by the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) as the source of organic solvents that contaminated private wells a half-mile from the site, as well as a local creek that ran through the area. It's listed as a priority site for cleanup by the EPA.

"This (Horseheads) site warrants attention due to the nearby presence of an elementary school, water wells, multiple underlying aquifers, day-care centers, regulated freshwater wetlands and [homes](#)," Toxics Targeting President Walter Hang writes in a letter to the village planning board.

Horseheads village officials will continue their review of the \$30 million project -- which will create about 400 jobs when it is completed -- on Tuesday night when the village planning board and the village trustees will hold a joint workshop. Village Mayor Donald Zeigler has said the village isn't at the point in its review process where it can determine if a full environmental review is needed.

The village, Zeigler said, will have to go through the State Environmental Quality Review process, ask the proper questions and ensure they have been properly answered before making that decision.

Hang said his firm is an environmental data research company that uses the [Freedom of Information](#) law to compile local, state and federal environmental data. The data is used by engineers, environmental consultants, public drinking water purveyors and government agencies across New York.

Once the data are received from the various official sources, they are mapped and made available to the public. The firm is familiar with the proposed Schlumberger site and the surrounding industrial park, Hang said, because of the industrial manufacturing and dumping practices that took place there.

Many of the 80 sites identified on the Toxics Targeting map involved leaking tanks, fires, traffic accidents, spills, deliberate dumpings and non-compliance with clean-up standards. Some of the major incidents revealed by Hang's research involve the Thomas & Betts Corp., Elmira Litho, Sysco Foods and Beavers Petroleum. In

the cases where a clean-up is required, Hang's letter says, it should be done before the Schlumberger site is re-developed.

Hang attended a September public hearing on the Schlumberger project to provide some background information on the site and to state his belief that because of its history a full environmental study was warranted. None of those past incidents involved Schlumberger.

"But after the hearing, I was thinking about what the Schlumberger staff had been saying about them being a good company and not having any environmental problems, and that's when I found out about the National Priority List site in Wyoming," he said.

Hang's firm also compiled EPA information documenting hazardous waste violations involving Schlumberger or its subsidiary facilities in California, Utah, Texas and New Jersey. The information, plus the database report for the site, were provided to the planning board with the petition.

"(The proposed site and surrounding area) has had a lot of problems, and that's why it is challenging for local officials to get and understand all of the data," Hang said. "Our job is to give them the information and try to help them. They are ones who have to make the decision. It's really complicated but it's my belief that the more information you can get, the better you can inform yourself and the better decision be made."



TOM WILBER / Staff Photo

A fleet of trucks to develop natural gas wells in the region are staged at Schlumberger's new Horseheads operation. Plans call for building a 400,000 square foot plant on the site at The Center at Horseheads industrial park. ([Buy this photo](#))

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\* The Horseheads Village Planning Board and Board of Trustees will hold a workshop at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday to review information submitted by Schlumberger Technology Corp. on a proposed natural gas drilling services facility in the village. The meeting will be at the Horseheads Village Hall, 202 S. Main St.

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