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## State to host contamination hearing

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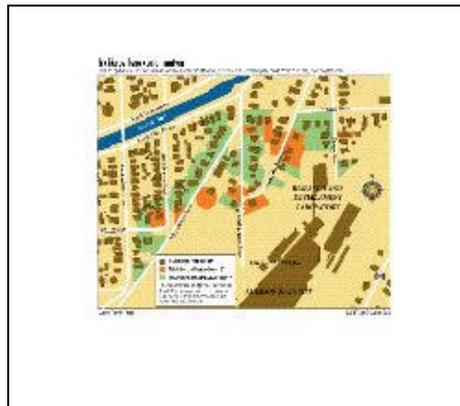
ITHACA -- Ken Deschere's rare throat cancer has been attributed to unknown origins. Diagnosed in 2003, Deschere has looked at his past and questioned what sources could have caused the mutation.

Living within the area being tested for possible trichloroethene, or TCE, contamination, one big question for Deschere is whether 20 years of working out of his basement office could be a contributing factor.

"It's very hard to draw conclusions, but this is still one of those unanswered questions. I've been very frustrated with the slow pace at which everything seems to be happening," he said of the investigation.

Deschere is one of a host of people invited to testify Thursday at a public hearing held by members of the New York State Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee.

The hearing will be the second in a series of three looking at



### CONTAMINATED SITES

Trichlorethene, or TCE, is only one chemical that has caused area residents concern of late. Below is a list of sites that are or have been environmental hot spots around the county.

- Ithaca Gun/Ithaca Falls: Lead contamination from the former Ithaca Gun site near Ithaca Falls led to a \$4 million clean up by the Environmental Protection Agency in 2002 and 2003.
- Jacksonville gas station: A series of gasoline leaks from an ExxonMobil station contaminated drinking water

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vapor intrusion and TCE contamination around the state. Vapor intrusion is the means by which volatile organic compounds, like TCE, move from being trapped as soil vapors into the ambient air.

In the case of South Hill, the TCE has been traced back to the former Morse Chain plant, which is now owned by Emerson Power Transmission. Morse Chain used TCE to degrease chain manufactured at the plant. It wasn't until the past few years that the potentially-carcinogenic aspects of the solvent were realized.

Since then, TCE has been found at varying levels in homes downhill from Emerson.

Janet Snoyer's TCE levels in her basement were high enough that Emerson installed a new cement floor and vapor mitigation system in her basement.

Snoyer will testify Thursday and said she too plans to discuss her frustration with the information sharing process.

"The cognitive problems my daughter had growing up match the side effects of vapor intrusion so completely. But from 1984 to 2004, there was a complete lack of information, so I was not able to make the best possible choice for my daughter," Snoyer said.

It wasn't until Snoyer's daughter went away to boarding school in the 10th grade that she was able to start bringing home the first in a long string of A's. This was after her not being able to complete any academic subjects in the ninth grade.

wells in the area, leading to some residents abandoning their homes. The area now has municipal water service.

- **Axiohm:** A former manufacturing site, the Danby Road factory has areas of TCE contamination at past dump sites on the property. Developers are applying for brownfield funds to remediate the site.
- **Colonial Dry Cleaners:** Tetrachloroethylene, a dry-cleaning solvent and suspected carcinogen, was documented as being released from the site at East Shore Drive, Lansing, and contaminating drinking water wells. A vapor extraction system now treats the site.
- **Cornell University radiation dump:** This site, near the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport where Cornell disposed of old radioactive waste, was remediated in 2003.
- **Cornell chemical disposal site:** The university capped and built barriers around this site, as well as building a groundwater collection and treatment system for the former chemical dump in 2004.
- **Former Tanana Oil gas station:** The old Corn Street station was the site of leaking gas tanks, which were removed in late 2002, and found to have limited impact on surrounding homes.
- **Former City of Ithaca dump:** Now the site of development in the city's southwest, the DEC ruled in 2000 and again in 2003 that toxicity levels in the area are low.
- **Former Morse Chain plant:** Investigation and remediation is ongoing at the former chain manufacturer. Traces of trichloroethene, a degreasing solvent and possible carcinogen, have been found in homes downhill from the plant on South Hill.
- **Flavin's Fall Creek Auto Repair:** Leaking gas tanks led to groundwater pollution. The site was remediated in

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After moving out, Snoyer's daughter eventually graduated summa cum laude from college.

"I don't want to cry over spilt milk. I want to be reasonable and add to the discussion," Snoyer said of her testimony.

Also contributing will be Timothy Weber, who has been active in independently collecting data and distributing it to area residents. Weber clocked a number of hours creating the map featured with this story. He and some friends went door to door, gathering test results from neighbors. Those numbers were then compared to a map provided by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, on which test results were given for general areas but not specific to homes.

"As a resident, if we get positive test results then we want mitigation. If it's low or zero we can't assume we're okay. We need to consider where our house is relative to any plumes. We really need that spatial information and we couldn't get that from the DEC," Weber said.

That information wasn't available because the DEC works under a policy requiring that all test results they release not be traceable to a specific address.

"Their policies prevent us from getting information we really need," Weber said.

It's problems such as these Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, D-125th, hopes the hearing will bring to light.

"This is still a relatively new concern for the state. We're very interested in pushing the envelope on this," Lifton said.

Assemblyman Tom DiNapoli, D-16th District, chair of the Environmental Conservation Committee, and Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, D-126th District, a committee member, will both be on hand for the hearing.

Alan Turnbull, executive director of Resident Action Group of Endicott, better known as R.A.G.E., recently talked with the same three Assembly representatives when they were in Endicott for a hearing in the fall. There, TCE leaking from the IBM plant affected about 480 homes and businesses. Turnbull's attention focused on the chemical when his wife developed a form of cancer on her tongue, also of unknown origins, similar to Deschere's.

Since the hearing, a report has been issued on the Endicott testimony and copies will be available Friday.

2003 and 2004.

- Coal tar on West Court Street: Clean up of coal tar, a byproduct of manufactured gas that contains potential carcinogens, is ongoing around the site of a building used to create the product from the 1850s to 1920s.

Source: Journal staff research

#### On the Net

Visit The Journal's Web site to read more stories on trichloroethene spill: [www.theithacajournal.com/toxic](http://www.theithacajournal.com/toxic)

"From the reports, what they felt needed to be done -- it's pretty much on the money. They want to keep the general public more informed on what folks are doing and why they're doing it and expedite testing," Turnbull said.

Lifton said such reports often serve as the foundation for eventual legislation.

"That's one of the prime ways bills get made," she said.

Turnbull, like several others, plans to submit written testimony as he will be unavailable to attend Thursday's hearing. Written comments will be accepted from anyone who offers them but only those invited to testify will be able to comment at the hearing.

DiNapoli's office plans to hold a press conference before the hearing at 10 a.m. Thursday at the Ithaca town hall, 215 N. Tioga St. The hearing is scheduled to start at 10:30 a.m. and also will be in the town hall.

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