

Search For Du Pont Waste Continues At Dump

BY SUSAN USHER

An official at Du Pont's Cape Fear Plant says it could take a month to find and retrieve 75,000 pounds of xylene-laced DMT mistakenly dumped in the Brunswick County landfill during April.

Even then, said Robert DeHaas, the senior engineer who first spotted the problem, he doesn't expect workmen to find all the material. "I would be surprised if we did," he added.

He added, however, that the state has determined the material is not hazardous as first thought by company officials. Still, it isn't the kind of thing the state or Du Pont likes to see in a landfill. Du Pont is spending up to \$100,000 to get it out of the landfill.

"Because it is a process material diverted to the landfill by mistake, we want to remove it," said DeHaas. "If the state had had an opportunity to think about it, it wouldn't have wanted it there. It's in a gray area."

The waste normally would have been disposed of in the company's on-

site incinerators. Instead, the plant's waste-handling contractor diverted it to the county landfill when one of the incinerators failed and had to undergo extensive repairs.

"He didn't know it contained xylene," said DeHaas. "He thought it was DMT."

The operator has since been told that when he must choose between disposing of process wastes or regular trash and garbage at the landfill, to choose the trash.

DMT, or dimethylterephthalate, is a product of the Cape Fear Plant used in the manufacture of Dacron. It is permitted to dump DMT-contaminated Dacron polymer waste in the landfill.

This particular batch of DMT, however, included 5 percent xylene, an organic chemical used in liquid form to process DMT. It doesn't usually show up in the final product.

DeHaas said in this particular instance there was a problem in the process vessel, which normally runs

at 350 degrees to 400 degrees, and it was cooled to room temperature. Workmen were sent in to chip out the DMT residue.

When the material cooled, the xylene had been incorporated into the hardened DMT like an alloy. Visibly the only difference was an off-color, black, he said, to indicate it was anything other than DMT.

The charcoal-like chunks were bagged in plastic, then sealed inside 750 special six-sided cardboard containers that allow for complete incineration.

But the material wasn't burned. Instead, starting April 8 and continuing for the next four weeks, it was gradually moved to the county landfill. "When we caught up with the problem, it had all been taken," said DeHaas.

The problem now is finding it, 20 feet or more down near the bottom of a disposal hole recently covered up at the landfill. "They think it is all in one or two or three separate places," he said.

Du Pont has hired its regular waste contractor, Maintenance Inc., owned by Ezra Dale, to handle the removal.

"If we don't get all of it, it will be a very insignificant contributor to any problem in the landfill," suggested DeHaas.

Using their daily logsheets, county landfill employees have marked off a section of the hole where they expect to find the waste. That side of the landfill has been closed to public dumping during the search.

Since last Thursday, a Maintenance Inc. crew has been digging waste from that hole and moving it to an adjacent one as the search for the xylene-contaminated DMT continues.

DeHaas said he didn't think the material could easily leak into the groundwater supply because the DMT would have to be substantially degraded in order to release the xylene. He suggested methane production from garbage in the landfill would be a greater problem.

Flares Found At Holden Had Already Been Fired

BY TERRY POPE

Two military flares that washed ashore on Holden Beach created a stir last Wednesday evening for officials there.

According to Holden Beach Patrol Officer Dennis Pickard, the flares were found by persons walking along the beach in the 1000 to 1100 block of Ocean Boulevard West.

Pickard said the flares were the size of small fire extinguishers and "looked similar to grease guns," like those mechanics use to grease cars with.

The copper-colored tubes had "U.S. Navy" printed on the sides, he said, along with a white warning sticker. The warning advised persons that find the flares to notify either the

military or the local police department.

Holden Beach police notified officials at the U.S. Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point. The devices were recovered Wednesday evening by military officials, who also told town officials some good news.

"They advised us that both had

already been fired," Pickard said, "so there was no danger involved."

Pickard said one flare was spotted around 2 p.m. while another was found washed ashore around 5:30 p.m.

Officials did not know if the flares were part of the same military debris that washed ashore last Tuesday on Long Beach, Pickard said.

EMC Lowers Water Standards In Bald Head Marina Basin

Meeting in Southport last Thursday, the N.C. Environmental Management Commission lowered water quality standards near Bald Head Island.

The island's nine-acre marina basin was downgraded from SA to SC, with a stipulation that no sewage disposal be allowed so as to help protect nearby shellfishing waters. SA waters, the state's highest classification, allow shellfishing, swimming and aquatic life. SC waters, the lowest classification, are protected for aquatic life only.

Dug in 1983, the basin has not been used for shellfishing. A study by the

Division of Environmental Management staff suggests that the SA classification was inappropriate since swimming and shellfishing do not exist there and that the waters cannot be improved to allow those uses.

Commission members also downgraded waters around Wrightsville Beach, while upgrading water quality standards for a section of the Northeast Cape Fear River popular with swimmers and skiers.

The effective date of the reclassification is August 1.

Also, the Commission approved a

special order by consent for E.I. Du Pont de Nemours and Co.'s Cape Fear Plant at Phoenix.

The plant operates four heaters and vaporizers and an oil-fired boiler, none of which have ever received an air quality permit from the division.

Also, Du Pont has been unable to predict compliance with ambient air quality standards for sulfur oxides by use of a computer model. This is partly because there are other sources of sulfur oxides emissions in the same general area.

Du Pont has agreed to work with

other industry in the area to provide this information by working with the other affected sources, according to the DEM staff.

The order will allow for development of what is expected to be "a very complex modeling analysis" that will provide for issuance of a permit for the existing equipment.

Later Thursday, with member Jerry Lewis of Shallotte as host, EMC members dined with local government and community leaders in Bald Head Village. An engineer, Lewis is chairman of the Commission's Groundwater Committee.

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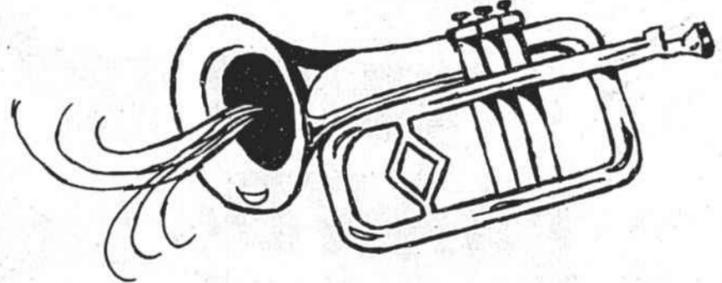
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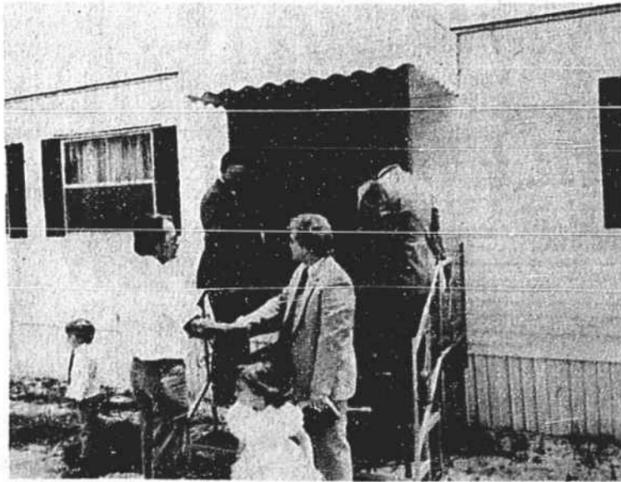
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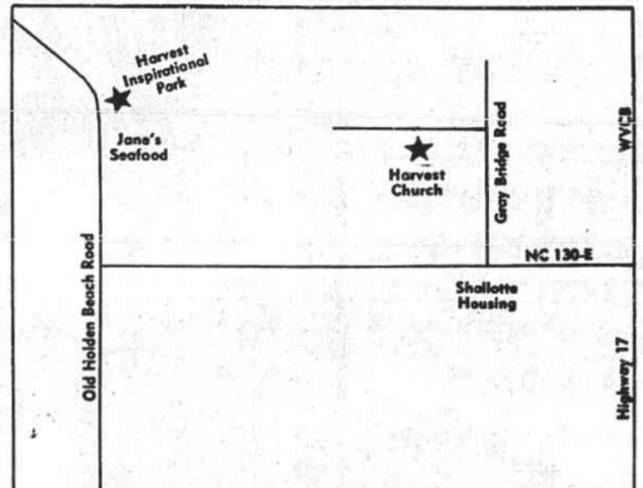
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