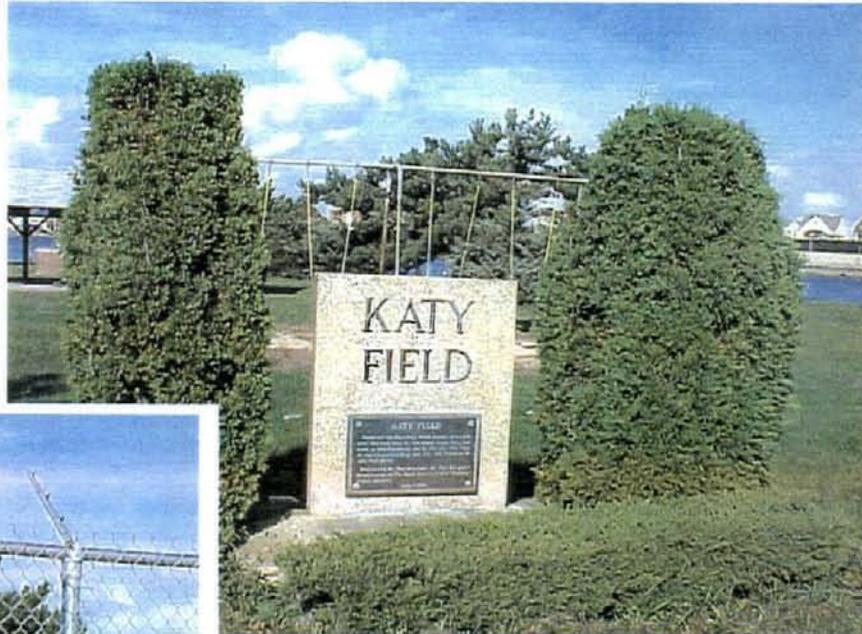




Katy Field

A Risk Communication Case Study



Prepared by:
Navy Environmental Health Center

July 2000



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Katy Field, a small recreation site on Naval Station Newport, became the center of controversy for the Department of the Navy and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region I in the fall of 1998. This area, once used for fire fighter training, is an Installation Restoration (IR) Site.

Scientific studies and investigations, completed in 1994, indicated Katy Field was safe for *recreational use*. Both the EPA and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management reviewed and commented on the documents and no formal disagreements were raised concerning this conclusion. In the spring of 1998 two land use decisions for Katy Field, which seemed acceptable and safe to the Navy under the *recreational use* scenario, were interpreted as significant and potentially dangerous by the Environmental Protection Agency.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the Navy allowed for an increase in the use of Katy Field in the spring of 1998. They concluded this decision potentially increased the exposure of children to contaminated soil at the site and thereby increased the risk to their health and safety. In the fall of 1998, extensive local media coverage overstated the disagreements between the Navy and the Environmental Protection Agency over Katy Field and ignited unnecessary fear within the local community concerning the perceived health risk for this site.

Between October 1998 and January 1999, significant and unnecessary amounts of time and resources were committed on the part of the government agencies involved with Katy Field as well as Rhode Island congressional staffs to address fears within the community about a threat which did not actually exist. Even more costly than this time and effort, is the potential long-term damage to the Navy's credibility as a trusted neighbor within the local community of Newport, Rhode Island.

To prevent a repeat of the Katy Field incident at other Navy activities, the Chief of Naval Operations tasked the Navy Environmental Health Center with conducting a detailed case study. This case study identifies the successes and breakdowns in the Navy's efforts in environmental risk management, partnering, and community involvement associated with Katy Field. The lessons learned from these successes and breakdowns are summarized in three recommendations for all Navy Bases with IR sites:

- (1) Allow for stakeholder involvement in Installation Restoration site land use decisions whenever possible.**
- (2) Work to build and maintain open lines of communication between stakeholder groups and agencies to help foster long term trust.**
- (3) Plan and coordinate public outreach efforts that incorporate risk communication principles.**

These three recommendations all have roots within risk communication theory. It was the eventual incorporation of risk communication principles into the Katy Field public outreach effort between late November 1998 and January 1999, which led to a successful ending to the crisis. This success highlights the primary conclusion from the Katy Field Case Study:

To help avoid additional public communication crises, all Installation Restoration, environmental management, and public affairs personnel should attend risk communication training and actively practice the skills they learn.

CONTENTS

Site History.....	1
Purpose of Katy Field Case Study.....	4
Stakeholder Actions and Reactions.....	5
Lessons Learned.....	15
Conclusions.....	23
Supporting Documentation.....	Appendix A
News Media Coverage.....	Appendix B
Navy Risk Communication Resources.....	Appendix C

SITE HISTORY

The Old Fire Fighter Training Area

Katy Field, formerly known as the Old Fire Fighter Training Area, is located on the northern end of Coasters Harbor Island on the Naval Station Newport (NAVSTA Newport). It is a 5.5-acre recreation area adjacent to Narragansett Bay. The facilities include a picnic area with an open pavilion, a playground, and a baseball field.

Fire fighting training activities were conducted on 1-2 acres of the site from World War II to 1972. The majority of the training activities were conducted in the buildings constructed to simulate ship compartments, on a concrete pad with burning areas, and on other paved areas. By 1972, most structures associated with fire training activities were demolished.

Building 144 is the only structure remaining on site. The building was used for a child day-care center after the fire fighting training facilities were closed and demolished. In 1976, recreation facilities including ballfields and a playground were constructed. In 1994, the child day-care center was relocated to an off-site, newly constructed facility adjacent to the Armed Forces YMCA.



Old Fire Fighter Training Area 1944

National Priority Site Listing

In 1989, NAVSTA Newport (formerly known as the Naval Education and Training center, NETC) was listed on the National Priorities List (NPL) primarily because of the McAllister Point Landfill and Tank Farm #1 sites. A Federal Facilities Agreement (FFA) for NAVSTA Newport was signed in March of 1992 between the Department of the Navy, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This agreement details the regulatory partnership and framework for completing Installation Restoration Program activities on NAVSTA Newport. A Phase I Remedial Investigation was initiated in 1992 to quantify the materials in the soil and groundwater resulting from the past use of Katy Field. In 1994, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) completed a Public Health Assessment (1994 PHA) for NAVSTA Newport. The Navy worked in a partnership with EPA and RIDEM in 1994 to perform additional remedial investigations and

to produce a Human Health Risk Assessment (1994 HHRA) for Katy Field. The Navy's interpretation of the data in the 1994 HHRA and the 1994 PHA led to the conclusion that the site is acceptable for recreational use. As part of the partnership with EPA and RIDEM, their personnel reviewed and commented on all documents. No formal disagreements were raised concerning the Navy's conclusion that Katy Field is safe for recreational use.

Katy Field as a Recreation Site



Katy Field Playground and Picnic Equipment



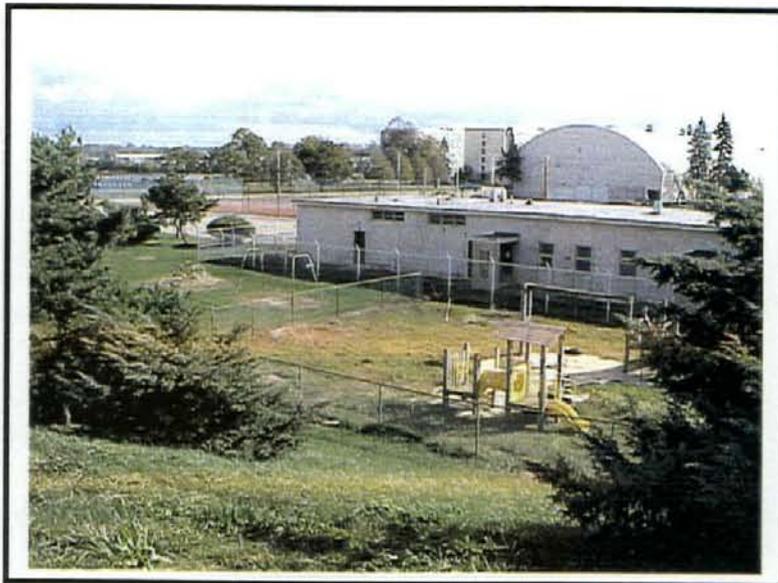
Between 1994 and 1998, the Navy continued to use Katy Field for recreational purposes. This included scheduled events such as Command picnics and fireworks displays as well as open use of the facilities by military personnel and their families. In addition, the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) Department of NAVSTA Newport continued to sponsor other activities up through the summer of 1998 that involved children using the playground and other recreation facilities on Katy Field.

One scheduled or routine activity was the annual Military Youth Summer Day Camp which operated out of the Gymnasium, Building 1801, and used Katy Field's playground facilities between June and August each year for a few hours each day.

In the spring of 1998, two actions occurred which increased the use of Katy Field.

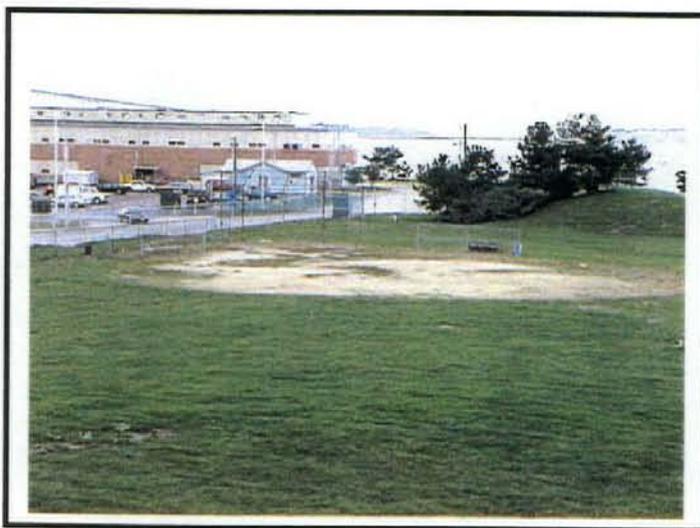
1. MWR initiated the process to move the Military Youth Summer Day Camp from the Gymnasium to Building 144, located on Katy Field.

Due to limited space in the Gymnasium, MWR needed a new location to house the day camp. Building 144 seemed a logical choice because it was vacant, had been a child-care facility in the past, and was adjacent to the Katy Field playground the children used each year as part of the Day Camp.



Back view of Building 144 and Playground

2. The Commanding Officer of NAVSTA Newport received a request by the Middletown Rhode Island Little League to use the Katy Field baseball diamond during the summer of 1998. The Legal Officer, Public Affairs Officer, Executive Officer, and Commanding Officer reviewed the request. Based on the fact that military and civilian employees and dependents were currently allowed to use the baseball diamond for recreation activities, **no concerns were raised** about allowing the Middletown group to use the site. The Public Works Department, including the Environmental Division, was not included in this decision making process.



Katy Field Baseball Diamond

PURPOSE OF KATY FIELD CASE STUDY

Two land use management decisions concerning Katy Field were made in the spring of 1998 that eventually became the center of controversy in the fall of 1998.

- 1. The decision to relocate the Military Youth Summer Day Camp to Building 144*
- 2. The decision to allow the Middletown Little League to use the baseball diamond on Katy Field*

The controversy surrounding these decisions focused on the possible health risks to children who played on Katy Field and may have been exposed to contaminated soil on this Installation Restoration (IR) site. The circumstances surrounding the two decisions and the reaction of the various stakeholder groups led to extensive local media coverage, significant community concern, and unnecessary elevation of the issue to high levels within the Navy and Congress.

Lack of coordination and communication between the EPA, Navy, and ATSDR and the lack of an immediate and consolidated risk communication effort, led to extensive media coverage of Katy Field. This coverage escalated public fears by presenting a non-existent health risk as a real-time threat to local children. **Between October 1998 and January 1999, significant amounts of time and resources were committed on the part of the Navy, Rhode Island congressional staffs, the EPA, ATSDR, and RIDEM to address fears within the community about a threat which did not actually exist.**

To prevent a repeat of the Katy Field public relations incident at other Navy activities, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) tasked the Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) with conducting a detailed case study.

This case study is intended to identify the successes and breakdowns in the Navy's efforts in environmental risk management, partnering, and community involvement associated with Katy Field.

The evaluation begins with the Navy's decision in the spring of 1998 to expand the use of Katy Field from one of casual recreation to a site where organized youth activities were held. The study concludes with the release of the final Public Health Consultation by ATSDR in the spring of 1999. It contains a narrative account of the major actions and reactions among the stakeholder groups and recommendations based on lessons learned and risk communication principles to help avoid this type of public relations incident in the future.

STAKEHOLDER ACTIONS AND REACTIONS

EPA Expresses Concern

In April of 1998 EPA personnel expressed concern to the Northern Division Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NORTHDIV) over an article published in the April 17, 1998 issue of the *Newport Navalog*, NAVSTA Newport's weekly newspaper. The article showed a picture of children playing on Katy Field and discussed the Youth Camp which would be open in Building 144 during the summer of 1998 to military and civilian dependants.

Personal knowledge of the Katy Field site history and interpretation of the information in the article led EPA Region I to two very important conclusions.

1. EPA believed that there would be an increased use of Katy Field by children and,
2. As a result, increased potential health risk to these children from exposure to soil at the site.



**Building 144 Playground
Equipment – Open to Katy
Field**

Between April and June of 1998, personnel from NORTHDIV, EPA Region 1, and NAVSTA Newport had informal discussions and correspondence (e-mail) regarding the EPA's concerns over information in the Newport Navalog article. Based on these discussions and emails, NORTHDIV personnel believed that the EPA's primary concern with Katy Field was the risk to children from increased exposure to lead at the site. In an attempt to alleviate this concern, NORTHDIV ran the EPA's IEUBK model that estimated site-specific exposure to lead using concentrations measured during previous sampling events. **Using the average concentration of lead across the site, the IEUBK model did not indicate any elevated health risks for children playing on Katy Field.** The Navy discussed these findings with EPA in May of 1998.

ATSDR Requested to Conduct a Public Health Consultation

In June of 1998, an informal request for ATSDR to conduct a Public Health Consultation (PHC) on Katy Field was made during a conversation between personnel from EPA Region I and ATSDR. The purpose of the consultation was to assess if an increased risk to the health of children or adults exists at Katy Field. The Navy Environmental Health Center was notified via telephone of EPA's request and that the process for completing this PHC would be different than what was typically done for Navy sites. The ATSDR Region I office was planning to prepare the PHC versus the ATSDR headquarters personnel in Atlanta, Georgia, which was the normal process. NEHC was assured that headquarters personnel would be reviewing the draft and would send a copy to NEHC for review as soon as it was completed.

At this time, there was no indication that Katy Field was a higher than usual priority for ATSDR, and there was no indication that the situation had the potential to become contentious.

EPA Officially Disagrees with NORTHDIV Over the Safety of Katy Field

On July 21, 1998, NORTHDIV submitted a formal copy of the results of the IEUBK lead model to EPA Region I. At this point, NORTHDIV personnel felt the Navy had responded to EPA's concerns and that the issue was on its way to being resolved. **The EPA did not agree with the Navy's estimation of risk from lead exposure at Katy Field as calculated by the IEUBK model. A letter was sent from EPA Region I on July 28, 1998, to NORTHDIV.** In the letter, EPA acknowledged receipt of the Navy's IEUBK model results and discussed their disagreement with the Navy over potential health risks to children using Katy Field for activities "*substantially similar to the existence of a Day Care Center.*" The letter also indicated disappointment that the Navy was focusing their recent analysis of the site solely on lead when it is known to be contaminated with other compounds.

On the issue of lead exposure at the site, the EPA strongly disagreed with the Navy. Their July 28th letter stated that they also ran the IEUBK model for lead exposure at Katy Field.

Instead of using the average concentration from samples taken at the site, which is the generally accepted guidance from the EPA, the Region I office chose to run the model using the highest

The EPA findings from the IEUBK model indicated an elevated risk to the safety of children playing on the site.

concentration detected. Of the 40 lead samples taken from the Katy Field site, the highest value was 2970 mg/kg. All other samples were below 400 mg/kg with results from 31 of the 40 samples below 100 mg/kg. The high concentration was considered an outlying value by the Navy, and not representative of the overall level of exposure at the site. EPA guidance indicates that exposure to areas with lead in soil concentrations below 400 mg/kg is considered safe for the public. This includes residential scenarios that would potentially result in more exposure to the soil than expected under the recreational scenario applied to Katy Field. Because each of the remaining samples, as well as the average concentration, were below this safety limit, the Navy

concluded the site was safe. The EPA's rationale for using the high value was that there were too many data gaps to allow the use of the average concentration. They decided to use what they considered the worst case scenario, which resulted in their conclusion that Katy Field is not a safe play area for children.

The July 28th letter also included a discussion of the 1994 HHRA for Katy Field that was approved by the EPA. EPA Region I personnel decided to re-review the 1994 HHRA because they no longer felt it was conservative enough in its estimate of risk to children.

A copy of the EPA's July 28th letter which includes details on the reasoning behind their newly formed opposition to the 1994 HHRA is included in Appendix A.

Prior to receiving the July 28th letter, neither NORTHDIV personnel nor the NAVSTA Newport Environmental staff was aware of the magnitude of EPA's concerns and oppositions over the use of Katy Field.

Both NORTHDIV and the NAVSTA Newport Environmental Office reviewed the EPA's letter. Based on the inflammatory language used and the apparent call for the Navy to restrict access to Katy Field, NAVSTA Newport decided to organize and send the Navy response. **Up until this point, the Navy was under the impression that the only compound that the EPA was concerned with at Katy Field was lead.** NORTHDIV felt they had addressed this concern adequately with their submission of the IEUBK lead model results. The Navy was not aware of the EPA's disagreements with the 1994 HHRA, and they were not expecting the letter that was received.

ATSDR Provides the Initial Public Health Consultation to the Navy

On October 8, 1998, ATSDR provided the draft Public Health Consultation for Katy Field to the Navy. **The report indicated two important issues of concern.**

- 1. The potential for elevated risks to children from exposure to lead at Katy Field did exist**
- 2. But, insufficient data was available to determine the actual levels of risk.**

As a precaution, based on the draft report results, the Commanding Officer of NAVSTA Newport directed the MWR department to stop using Katy Field as a play area for any children participating in their programs.

The Navy Environmental Health Center (NEHC) acts as liaison for the Navy with ATSDR and reviews all Public Health Assessments and Consultations that ATSDR produces for Navy sites. **Upon review of the draft PHC, NEHC noted several discrepancies that led to conclusions and recommendations in the document that were not accurate.** One major discrepancy was that ATSDR had not used all of the available sampling data. The results in the draft PHC were based only on a review of the data ATSDR had on file. Their personnel did not realize that the Navy had completed additional sampling at the site following ATSDR's recommendation in their

1994 PHA conducted for NAVSTA Newport. As a result, they had not requested any additional data from the Navy for inclusion in this PHC.

NEHC personnel knew that the PHC draft, like other ATSDR initial draft documents, was a working document. They planned to work with ATSDR to gather and incorporate all of the necessary information. At this point, they did not consider this site to be higher priority than any other site. **NEHC had received no indication that the disagreement between EPA Region I and the Navy was becoming contentious or that there was any possibility that the results of this PHC initial draft would ever be released to the press or the public.**

The Navy Provides Official Response to EPA's Concerns

As of the middle of October 1998, NAVSTA Newport had still not officially responded to EPA's letter of July 28, 1998.

Conversations and email correspondence had occurred during which EPA personnel questioned the amount of time the Navy was taking in responding to their concerns. NAVSTA Newport continued to instruct NORTHDIV not to respond to the letter, because they were preparing the response.

On October 27, 1998, NAVSTA Newport sent a response to EPA's letter of July 28, 1998. The letter stated that due to disagreements on technical points between the EPA and the Navy, NAVSTA Newport had "**decided to err on the side of caution and safety and enhance controls at the site.**" NAVSTA Newport proposed replacing the first two feet of topsoil with clean fill in the area adjacent to Building 144 (up to as much as two acres) and installing a perimeter fence (five to six feet high) to restrict access. In addition, Navy personnel would be instructed to discontinue use of the site until the permanent controls were complete in an estimated 60-90 days.

A copy of the Navy's response of October 27th is included in Appendix A.

The First of Many Katy Field News Stories Hits the Press

On the same day, October 27th, the Associated Press released a story including interviews with EPA and NAVSTA Newport personnel questioning the safety of children who had played on Katy Field. The report identified an anonymous source of information, but did state that the person attended the NAVSTA Newport Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) meeting on October 21, 1998. **EPA personnel informed the Navy that several RAB members and visitors requested a copy of EPA's July 28th letter following the RAB meeting.** The letter was part of the public record, and therefore, EPA provided the copies.

Congressional Involvement Elevates Concern

Congressman Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island became involved in the Katy Field issue on October 28, after reading the newspaper coverage.

Congressman Kennedy sent two letters on the 28th of October to Navy Secretary Dalton and Carol Browner the EPA Administrator.

- In his letter to the Navy, Congressman Kennedy urged "*immediate action to ensure the safety of all the children who have been using Katy Field.*" He acknowledged the difference in opinion between the Navy and the EPA over the safety of Katy Field, and stated that he "*must choose to opt on the side of extreme caution.*" The letter stated that the Congressman had learned that the EPA was considering legal actions to prompt the Navy to act, and he wanted the proposed fence to be built immediately to ensure the safety of the children. In addition, he requested that the Navy offer immediate testing at its medical facilities to all children who have played at the park.
- In his letter to Carol Browner of the EPA, Congressman Kennedy stated his support of the EPA's position on Katy Field and encouraged the agency to take the appropriate actions to ensure the safety of the children. He outlined the requests he made of the Navy in his letter to Secretary Dalton, and he attached a copy of the letter.

A copy of each of Congressman Kennedy's letters is attached in Appendix A.

On October 28th, Congressman Kennedy also released a statement to the media entitled, "*Kennedy Urges Navy Secretary Dalton to immediately erect a fence at Navy park, offer testing of children possibly exposed.*"

The release summarized the Congressman's requests to the Navy and his letter to the EPA. He stated that the Navy disputed some of the contamination studies and didn't close the park until it received repeated warnings from the EPA. The release quoted his October 28 letter to the Navy saying, "*common sense dictates that if there is any chance that even one child is threatened by the park, the Navy should take immediate steps to address the issue.*" NAVSTA Newport erected a fence around Katy Field four days later on November 1, 1998.

Fence Around Katy Field



A meeting was held on November 3, 1998, in Washington D.C. during which the federal agencies involved with Katy Field (the Navy, EPA, and ATSDR) briefed the Deputy Staff Director of the U.S. Senate Committee for Environment and Public Works. The discussions focused on the following:

1. Potential sampling gaps at the site
2. The perception that the use of Katy Field by children had intensified during the summer of 1998
3. The assumptions used in the Navy's 1994 Human Health Risk Assessment.

The meeting concluded with the Navy agreeing to take additional samples to fill the possible data gaps at Katy Field. The Navy was urged to complete this sampling before Thanksgiving 1998.

Extensive Media Coverage

Between October 28, 1998 and November 6, 1998, at least seven articles with a negative slant towards the Navy appeared in the local newspapers in the Newport, Rhode Island area. The articles highlighted disagreements between the EPA and the Navy concerning Katy Field. Several cited the July 28, 1998 letter from the EPA to the Navy. The articles alleged that the Navy was going against the advice of the EPA and allowing children to be put in danger by playing on a superfund site.

Examples of the headlines include "EPA prods Navy to shut playground built on Superfund site in Newport", "Parents upset Navy let children on contaminated site", and "Little League held games at field on site of toxic waste."

The Navy responded by preparing a news release on November 6, 1998.

The Navy news release entitled "Navy and EPA team-up on playground at Naval Station" was virtually ignored by the media with no articles printing this release.

Copies of the news release and the newspaper articles are included in Appendix B.

Congressional Request for a Town Hall Meeting

In response to the media frenzy, Congressman Kennedy requested that the Navy host a public meeting on November 23, 1998. The purpose of the meeting was to answer questions from concerned parents whose children had played at Katy Field and hopefully alleviate their fears about their children's health and safety. **On November 17, 1998, EPA provided the Navy with a draft copy of the statement they planned to give at the public meeting.**

The EPA proposed statement highlighted the disagreements between the EPA and the Navy over the interpretation of the 1994 risk assessment results and the parameters and assumptions used in the 1994 HHRA.

An EPA representative warned the Navy in an email that the EPA would contradict publicly any claims made by the Navy that the 1994 study used conservative assumptions and indicated acceptable levels of risk.

See Appendix A for copies of the proposed statement and the email.

Congressional Intervention, Demanding the EPA and the Navy Work Together

Senator John Chafee of Rhode Island sent a letter addressed jointly to Administrator Browner of the EPA and Navy Secretary Danzig on November 19, 1998. The letter criticized both the Navy and the EPA for a breakdown in the communication process which **"caused the affected community serious anxiety that might have been avoided."** He acknowledged that it is perfectly plausible for agencies to disagree over the interpretation of scientific information regarding contamination risks, but he expects agencies to resolve their differences quickly and work together to provide a unified message to the public.

Excerpts from Senator Chafee's letter were quoted in a local newspaper article on November 20, 1998 entitled, "Chafee rips EPA on playground."

At this point media coverage of the event began to turn from just anti-Navy to both anti-Navy and anti-EPA. The article stated that according to Senator Chafee, **"The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should share the blame along with the Navy for allowing children to play on a contaminated park at the Newport Naval Complex."** The letter is quoted as saying "the EPA should have insisted that the Navy bar children from the field in the spring when it discovered Katy Field was being used for recreational activities."

A copy of Senator Chafee's letter is included in Appendix A, and a copy of the newspaper article is attached in Appendix B.

The First Town Hall Meeting

Congressman Kennedy opened up the town hall meeting on November 23, 1998 by criticizing the EPA and Navy for their "in-fighting" and calling for the agencies to give the "straight story."

The congressman praised the Navy for responding to his requests that the Navy provide free health screening services and erect a fence around Katy Field.

Providing free health screening to the local community was no easy task for the Navy. The effort was coordinated by the Deputy Commander of Health Care, New England and required teamwork from multiple levels within the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (BUMED) chain of command. To provide medical screening services to non-Navy personnel required special permission from BUMED to overcome legal barriers. In addition there were potential manpower and logistical concerns associated with conducting the screening and adequately notifying the community. To streamline and simplify the effort, one point of contact was designated within the NAVSTA Newport Occupational Health Clinic to handle all of the screenings. In addition, the Navy Environmental Health Center assisted by preparing Fact Sheets for dissemination within the local community explaining where, when, and how they could take advantage of the free medical screening.

The Congressman was followed by presentations from the Navy, EPA, ATSDR, and RIDEM. The floor was opened up to questions following the presentations. In closing, Congressman Kennedy announced a follow-up town hall meeting planned for January 1999. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the results from the additional sampling and the final Public Health Consultation by ATSDR.

Although the messages from the various government agencies did not directly contradict one another, there was not one unified, easy-to-identify message conveyed by all of the agencies.

The media coverage in the local newspapers during the week following the town hall meeting continued to be critical of the Navy and EPA. The newspaper articles and television broadcasts were fueled by comments from a few vocal members of the public. The coverage tended to overstate the level of anger expressed by members of the community during the question and answer session.

Copies of the newspaper articles from this time are attached in Appendix B.

On December 1, 1998, the EPA sent a letter and questionnaire to the parents of the children who attended the summer day camp or participated in the Little League baseball games. The letter announced an open house on December 9th and 10th at which the EPA would be available to

"listen to your concerns and answer any questions about the site history, contaminants, or the investigations that are currently underway."

Both the EPA and the Navy were present at the open house. The Navy Environmental Health Center prepared poster displays and fact sheets for the open house and sent a representative to answer questions and address concerns.

Additional Sampling Conducted

The results from the 37 additional samples taken from Katy Field in November 1998 by the Navy were completed on December 24, 1998. The samples were tested for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds, poly-chlorinated bi-phenyls (PCBs), pesticides, inorganic chemicals (including lead), and dioxins. The results indicated that the surface soil at Katy Field does not present a health hazard to adults or children who played at the site. The Navy issued a press release announcing the testing was complete. A follow-up town hall meeting was scheduled for January 25, 1999.

Agency Teamwork in Preparation for the Second Town Hall Meeting

To prepare for the town hall meeting, a conference call was held on January 21, 1999. During the call, representatives from the Navy (DASN, NORTHDIV, and NEHC), EPA, ATSDR, and RIDEM discussed the joint messages that would be conveyed to the community by the government agencies.

All agencies agreed on three key messages

- (1) **Katy Field was safe for all recreational uses that had historically occurred on the site.**
- (2) **No one is likely to experience health problems from contact with soil at Katy Field.**
- (3) **Katy Field should remain closed until all environmental investigations at the site are complete (due to the safety issues associated with large construction equipment and not because of any environmental risks).**

The Second Town Hall Meeting

The follow-up public meeting was held on January 25, 1999 with all agencies conveying primarily the same three key messages. As a result, public reaction was generally positive with the majority of the people putting their fears to rest. Newspaper headlines during the week following the public meeting focused on the central message that the site is safe.

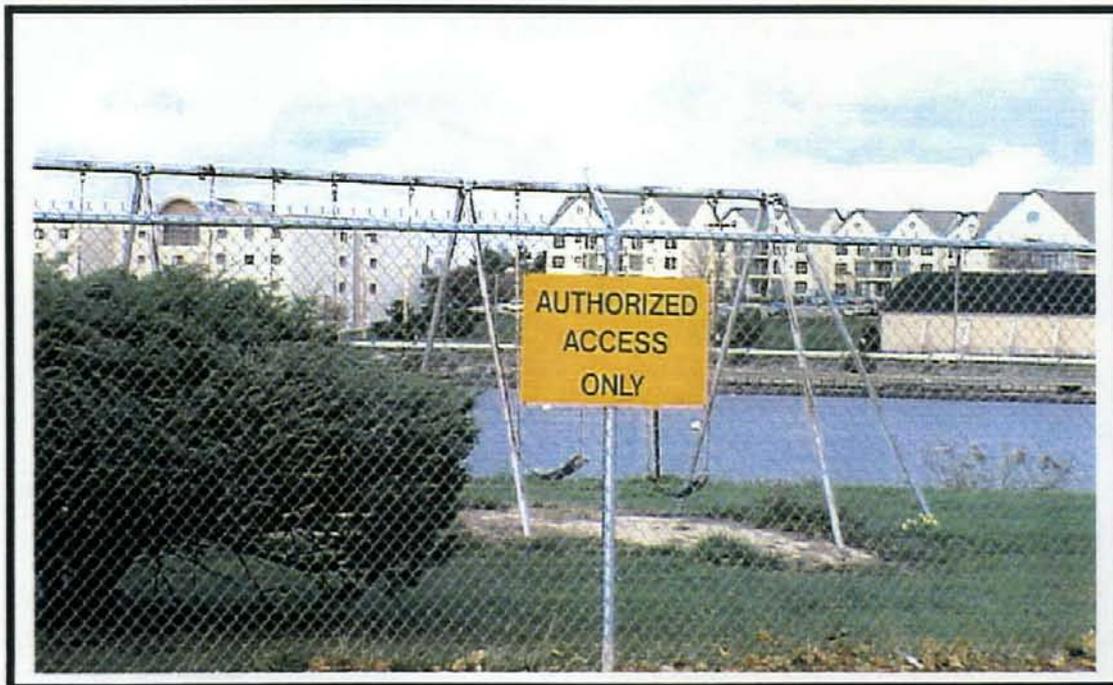
Examples of the newspaper headlines following the second town hall meeting include:

**"No health risk at Katy Field, federal officials say,"
"Playground is safe, officials tell parents," and "Topsoil tests
quelled fears over Navy site."**

Copies of these and other newspaper articles are attached in Appendix B.

Final Public Health Consultation Released – Fears Over Katy Field Put to Rest

The final Katy Field Public Health Consultation (PHC) document was released on March 31, 1999. On April 21, 1999, ATSDR hosted a public availability session. The purpose of the availability session was to answer questions on the results of the PHC, which indicated that exposure to soil at Katy Field does not pose a health risk to children or adults. Attendance was very low at the session with no real objections to the document, indicating that public concern over the site had diminished. For all practical purposes, the Katy Field incident was closed at this point, but not forgotten. Local residents are reminded daily of past doubts and fears concerning Katy Field when they pass by the fence which keeps the site closed off to the public still today. The media event is over, but effects such as diminished trust and credibility of the Navy within the local community will linger for quite some time. There are several lessons learned that may be taken from this event and used to help other Navy sites maintain trust and credibility within their local community.



Fence around Katy Field

LESSONS LEARNED

There are three primary recommendations from this case study that should be incorporated into other Navy environmental programs. All of the lessons learned from evaluating the Katy Field incident at NAVSTA Newport may be summarized into these three primary recommendations. They include the following:

- 1. Allow for stakeholder involvement in IR site land use decisions whenever possible.**
- 2. Build and maintain open lines of communication between stakeholders and foster long-term trust between agencies and stakeholder groups through partnering.**
- 3. Use a planned and coordinated public outreach effort that incorporates risk communication principles.**

A discussion of each of the recommendations follows. The discussions use specific examples from the Katy Field story to highlight communication breakdowns. Hopefully by examining these problems, other Navy sites can avoid making similar mistakes that could result in time consuming and costly public relations events.

1. Navy activities should allow for stakeholder involvement in IR site land use decisions whenever possible.

Two critical decisions were made in the spring of 1998 concerning potential increase in the use of Katy Field. They were the decision to move the Summer Day Camp activities from the gymnasium to Building 144, adjacent to Katy Field, and the decision to allow the Middletown Little League to use the Katy Field baseball diamond. Neither decision involved input from all of the major stakeholders. At a minimum, the NAVSTA Newport Environmental Office and the NORTHDIV Remedial Project Manager (RPM) should have been consulted on both decisions and the Middletown

Little League should have been notified that Katy Field is located on an IR site before they were allowed access to the facilities. In addition, input from the EPA RPM for NAVSTA Newport may have proven helpful.

The EPA Region I RPM stated during her interview that if she had been allowed input into these decisions before they were made, then the incident may have been avoided.

The EPA and NORTHDIV could possibly have worked out their disagreements over the safety of the site before the additional or increased use was approved. This did not occur because the EPA RPM knew nothing of either land use decision before they were made. In addition, the Little League group received no prior notification of the history of the site and NAVSTA Newport's Environmental Office knew nothing about the request before permission to use the park was granted.

A key lesson learned from the Katy Field incident is that Navy land use decisions involving Installation Restoration (IR) sites and areas immediately adjacent should involve the use of a standardized review and approval process.

The department responsible for Environmental Cleanup should always be included in this review and approval process. In addition, local community stakeholder groups as well as local, state, and federal regulatory groups should be allowed to provide input whenever possible. Incorporation of the thoughts and opinions of the various stakeholder groups such as the local Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), the EPA, and RIDEM into NAVSTA Newport's decision making process in the spring of 1998 may have prevented the heightened public concern and media event in the Fall of 1998.

2. Navy activities should build and maintain open lines of communication between stakeholder groups and agencies to foster long term trust.

Between the spring of 1998 and the beginning of 1999 there were numerous instances of breakdown in communication among the agencies and other stakeholders involved with Katy Field. Misunderstandings and ineffective information exchange occurred between the Navy and EPA, the Navy and ATSDR, and internally between different groups within the Navy. The lack of effective negotiation and risk communication skills in the every day interactions between Katy Field stakeholders in the spring and summer of 1998 helped pave the way for the negative media coverage and unnecessary public fears concerning Katy Field in the fall of that year.

The Navy and EPA: Communication Breakdowns

The initial breakdown in communication concerning Katy Field occurred between the Navy and EPA RPMs. After interviewing both the EPA Region I RPM for NAVSTA Newport and the Navy NORTHDIV RPM, it is clear that there was a misunderstanding between the two. The misunderstanding involved a clear definition of EPA Region I concerns about the site and the degree of this concern.

The NORTHDIV RPM felt the Navy was answering the questions and doubts the EPA had about Katy Field when he provided the IEUBK lead model results, which indicated the site is safe. The inflammatory letter from EPA Region I to NORTHDIV on July 28, 1998, stated that the EPA was in fact not satisfied with the assumptions made by the Navy in generating the IEUBK results. In addition, it highlighted for the first time problems the EPA had with the 1994 risk assessment which they had previously approved in writing.

The EPA's July 28th letter became a primary source of information used by the media to ignite public concern in the fall of 1998. It may have never been written if the RPM's had adequately identified their differences in opinion and used more effective communication skills during their meetings and correspondence to clear-up all disagreements.

Both the EPA and the Navy would have benefited from the use of risk communication and specifically active listening skills by their RPMs.

The Navy and ATSDR: Communication Breakdown

A second interagency communication breakdown concerning Katy Field occurred between the Navy Environmental Health Center and ATSDR. NEHC was informed about the PHC for Katy Field informally via telephone call. During this conversation and others that followed, NEHC and ATSDR representatives discussed the reasons for conducting the PHC, but they never discussed the time frame for completion or any assistance which the Navy could provide in gathering information. The ATSDR Region I office was tasked with preparing the PHC versus the headquarters personnel, which is the usual procedure for Navy activities. ATSDR headquarters assured NEHC that they would receive a first review of the initial draft, especially in light of this change in procedure.

It is understood between the federal and state agencies that initial draft or validation Public Health Assessment or Public Health Consultation documents are not intended for distribution to the public. Based on the nature of this policy, verbally stated versus written, it is always possible that information from a draft document may be prematurely released to the public.

ATSDR has stated repeatedly in meetings with representatives from the Department of Defense that their policy is to prepare a validation draft (also called an initial draft) of their Public Health Assessment and Public

Health Consultation documents. This validation draft is provided to all primary stakeholders including the DOD agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the state environmental regulatory group for review and comment prior to the initial release to the public. Because this is not a formal, written policy, the draft document was provided to Congressman Kennedy upon his request. He in turn quoted the document in a statement to the press. The premature release of this information proved to be disastrous for the Navy.

As it turned out, the Navy disagreed with the recommendations of the draft PHC for several reasons, primarily because ATSDR had not used all available data in reaching their conclusions. They did not have this data because ATSDR Region I personnel did not request input from the Navy during preparation of the initial draft document. As a result, their document was incomplete and needed a large amount of revision. But before the stakeholders could work together to update and gather data for the site, the inaccurate conclusions from this first draft were presented to the public through the news media. **The release of the inaccurate PHC information may have been avoided if the Navy and ATSDR had discussed up front the information to be included in the PHC and assumptions that would be made. Instead the Navy relied on the comment period to identify large data gaps missing from the information ATSDR used to generate the report.**

A lesson learned from this unfortunate event is that Navy personnel should never trust that a document, based on its status as a draft, will not reach the public or the news media and be interpreted as absolute truth.

This lesson learned highlights the importance of producing the most complete and accurate initial draft documents as possible. Frequent communication between government agencies combined with a unified approach to answering public health questions and concerns will help this happen. Effective communication and a team effort between the government agencies involved with Katy Field would likely have produced a PHC initial draft including accurate data and conclusions. This may have prevented the Katy Field public relations crisis in the fall of 1998.

The Navy: Communication Breakdowns within the Agency

The third major example of communication breakdown during the Katy Field incident occurred within the Navy and involved NAVSTA Newport personnel and NORTHDIV personnel. NAVSTA Newport personnel realized quickly that it was not going to be easy to reply to the EPA's letter of July 28, 1998. As discussed earlier, they were not expecting this inflammatory letter or the lengthy list of action items associated with it.

In a high concern, low trust situation such as the Katy Field exposure issues, risk communication principles stress stakeholder involvement as an integral part of dispute resolution.

Developing a plan of action immediately which included a meeting between NORTHDIV, NAVSTA Newport, and the EPA to negotiate a response to the key action items in the letter would have been an effective way to ensure stakeholder involvement. In reality, there were no meetings or negotiations that involved all of the stakeholders working together until the situation was escalated into a controversy by the negative media coverage in late October and early November of 1998.

Interviews with personnel from NAVSTA Newport, NORTHDIV, and the EPA revealed that the effort made to address the EPA's July 28th letter was somewhat fragmented and unorganized. In trying to handle the situation themselves, NAVSTA Newport personnel often left the NORTHDIV RPM out of the information loop. Conversations and informal written communications between NORTHDIV, EPA Region I, and NAVSTA Newport often contained conflicting information. As a result, it appeared to EPA personnel that the two Navy groups, NORTHDIV and NAVSTA Newport, were not working together on the project.

During interviews with the EPA RPM, she indicated her impression was that the two Navy groups could not decide whose responsibility it was to reply to the letter, and that they were either stalling in providing the requested information or simply not taking EPA's concerns seriously.

NORTHDIV and NAVSTA Newport personnel had in fact decided after receiving the July 28th letter that NAVSTA Newport would prepare the Navy response and NORTHDIV would provide the technical information needed. But due to numerous disagreements among the NAVSTA Newport staff about the nature of the response, there was a very lengthy delay of almost three months before it was officially provided to the EPA.

The lengthy delay in responding to the EPA's letter, combined with conflicting information from the two Navy groups, led to numerous misunderstandings and miscommunication which have seriously eroded the trust between the Navy and EPA Region I.

By using effective risk communication skills, Navy personnel may have been able to preserve this trust that was built over the years between the two agencies.

The examples given above of communication breakdown and loss of trust among the Navy, EPA, and ATSDR highlight a very important lesson learned from the Katy Field public relations incident. The lesson is that negotiation and listening skills need to be incorporated into all IR Program communications, regardless of how informal or apparently inconsequential. To help accomplish this goal, all Navy RPMs and environmental program managers should be formally trained in effective negotiation and risk communication skills.

With proper training, Navy personnel will have the tools they need to help build and maintain trust between stakeholder groups and incorporate risk communication philosophy into their daily work practices.

3. All Navy activities should plan and coordinate a public outreach effort that incorporates risk communication principles.

The NAVSTA Newport efforts to respond to the negative press concerning Katy Field in the fall of 1998 provide several examples of why risk communication training is needed for all Navy personnel responsible for delivering information to the public. Three messages from this training may have helped Navy personnel avoid the problems associated with the Katy Field public relations effort.

- 1. Conduct advanced planning and preparation for media interviews and public meetings.**
- 2. Recognize the importance of timing in the public's perception of truth.**
- 3. Develop a working relationship with local reporters to ensure our side of the story is told.**

Conduct advanced planning and preparation for media interviews and public meetings

Risk communication literature stresses the importance of developing key messages and anticipating questions prior to any media interviews or public meetings. In addition, only people who are skilled in public speaking and have a working knowledge of risk communication should be selected to represent their organization. After reviewing the available media coverage concerning Katy Field and the files and transcripts available on the first public meeting in November 1998, it appears that there was not sufficient advanced effort to ensure the public received the Navy's key messages.

The first newspaper articles and TV interviews concerning Katy Field used sound bites and clips from the interviews with NAVSTA Newport personnel that did not convey the appropriate and important messages from the Navy.

The responses to tough questions, which should have been anticipated, indicated that either the speaker did not have the communication skills necessary to handle a media interview or that virtually no advanced preparation had been done.

Based on interviews with Navy and EPA personnel, it is clear that both agencies planned and prepared for the town hall meeting in November 1998, but a team approach was not used. The

Navy and EPA did not work together to develop their key messages for the public meeting. As a result, their differences in opinion were once again apparent to the concerned community and highlighted by the media. The Navy's positive messages were virtually ignored.

To prepare for the second town hall meeting in January of 1999, the agencies involved met and decided on the key messages that needed to be conveyed to the public. The EPA and the Navy were now working together to solve the problem in the eyes of the community. The media coverage following the second meeting was balanced and public concerns were alleviated.

Meeting with the other stakeholders and agencies involved to develop joint key messages prior to the first meeting in November may have helped to restore some of the public's trust of the Navy which was lost during this incident.

Recognize the importance of timing in the public's perception of truth

NAVSTA Newport's news release was not issued until one week following the initial negative media coverage of Katy Field in October 1998.

Risk communication literature recommends you take no more than 48 hours to dispute a negative claim in a high concern, low trust situation such as Katy Field.

By the time the Navy's side of the story was released, public opinion was already formed.

In addition, the media used the Navy's lack of a timely response to EPA's concerns about the potential risks at Katy Field against us. Various newspaper articles during October and November 1998 drew attention to the time that elapsed before the Navy responded to the EPA's letter of July 28, 1998. The articles implied that the Navy did not take the EPA's concerns seriously and/or did not care about the well being of the children. This implication provided fuel for the public outrage towards the Navy that erupted in the fall of 1998. Immediate responses in both situations may have helped the Navy maintain the trust and credibility they had earned over the years within the community.

Maintain a working relationship with local reporters to ensure your side of the story is told

None of the local newspapers printed the Navy news release on Katy Field that came out one week after the story hit the media. Based on interviews with NAVSTA personnel, no one had really worked to develop a relationship with any members of the local media. If they had, the Navy's story may have been printed early on and helped to curb some of the fears developing within the community over the safety of Katy Field.

The Katy Field media crisis exemplifies the need for an effective community involvement plan that incorporates risk communication theory at every Navy activity. Three of the key principles of risk communication were apparently lacking from the NAVSTA Newport public outreach efforts in the fall of 1998. Navy personnel did not do adequate advanced planning and preparation for media interviews and public meetings. They did not recognize the importance of timing in the public's perception of truth.

And lastly, they did not develop a close working relationship with local reporters to ensure publication of the Navy's side of the story. The media coverage concerning Katy Field in the fall of 1998 highlights the need for effective risk communication skills when conveying environmental health and safety information to the public. Specific training is available to meet this need.

Navy Public Affairs personnel and other management personnel, which may be called upon to represent their command during media interviews or public meetings, should have risk communication training and develop skills to use these tools.

CONCLUSIONS

Public concern surrounding Katy Field on NAVSTA Newport in the fall of 1998 was preventable. There were several opportunities between April 1998 and October 1999 where the use of effective communication skills could have changed the course of this incident. As a result, what appeared to be a simple difference in opinion between Remedial Project Managers (RPMs) over an Installation Restoration site escalated over time and erupted into controversy in the fall of 1998 for all Federal agencies involved with Katy Field.

Even more costly than the time and efforts spent to calm fears within the local community over a perceived versus actual risk, is the potential long term damage to trust and credibility which was lost within the local community of Newport. In addition, the working relationship between personnel from the agencies involved in the cleanup of installation restoration sites on NAVSTA Newport may also suffer from a loss of trust. Without trust and an open working relationship, it will be difficult for this team to effectively manage and negotiate clean-up operations.

Three primary recommendations came from the lessons learned at Katy Field, which may prevent this type of event at other Navy activities or lessen the damage to trust and credibility among the stakeholders involved.

1. *Navy activities should allow for stakeholder involvement in IR site land use decisions whenever possible.*
2. *Navy activities should work to build and maintain open lines of communication between stakeholder groups and agencies to help foster long-term trust.*
3. *Navy activities should plan and coordinate public outreach efforts that incorporate risk communication principles.*

All three recommendations have roots within risk communication theory, and virtually all of the lessons learned highlight one conclusion.

The first step towards achieving an effective community involvement program is adequate training.

None of the personnel involved with Katy Field had attended Risk Communication training, and they did not recognize the signs that this situation might develop into one of high concern and low trust within the local community.

The results of this lack of training were apparent in the initial public outreach and community education efforts in response to the negative media coverage of Katy Field. **To prevent a similar situation on other Navy Bases, all personnel involved with the Installation Restoration and other environmental programs, as well as public affairs personnel, should attend the 3-day Risk Communication Workshop offered by CECOS and be able to use the skills they learn.** It is especially important for personnel involved in IR program management, environmental management, and public affairs to practice the skills they learn during the workshop.

One final lesson learned, which is not associated with training, is apparent after reviewing the case study. Although it was not mentioned specifically in the recommendation section of this document, it stands out as common sense prevention. Navy activities must be cautious when changing or increasing the frequency of use for IR sites that have not been cleaned up to residential remediation goals. **It is imperative that all agencies are in agreement about the safety of an IR site before the land use options are changed in any way.** Opening these sites to personnel, their families, and the outside community presents great potential liability for the Navy. Formal documentation of the decisions made and outside agency review must be obtained in the event that future public safety standards or concerns differ from those of today.

Katy Field as a Navy Success Story

In closing, it is important to highlight that there was a successful ending to the Katy Field media crisis. This successful ending coincided with the incorporation of risk communication principles and theory into a unified public outreach effort among the government agencies involved. The initial efforts to communicate information on the perceived health risks at Katy Field were not successful because of disagreements between the agencies, which were amplified by negative media coverage and the lack of a unified message at the first public meeting in November of 1998.

Between November 1998 and January 1999, the government agencies achieved successful stakeholder involvement by working together and listening to one another. The agencies combined teamwork with negotiation and compromise to ensure a successful risk communication effort at the second public meeting in January 1999. As a result, ***their goal was achieved, to inform and educate the public and alleviate fears over a perceived health risk that never existed.***

Appendix A

Supporting Documentation

Katy Field: Supporting Documentation

<u>Document</u>	<u>Page</u>
United States Environmental Protection Agency Region I letter to James Shafer (Remedial Project Manager, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Northern Division) on July 28, 1998	A1
Naval Station, Newport letter to Kymberlee Keckler (US EPA Region I) on October 27, 1998	A6
Congressman Patrick Kennedy's letter to Navy Secretary John Dalton on October 28, 1998	A7
Congressman Patrick Kennedy's letter to EPA Administrator Carol Browner on October 28, 1998	A9
Kymberlee Keckler of EPA Region I email on November 17, 1998	A10
EPA Region I Draft Statement for Katy Field Town Hall Meeting of November 23, 1998	A12
Senator John Chafee's letter to EPA Administrator Carol Browner and Navy Secretary Danzig on November 19, 1998	A15



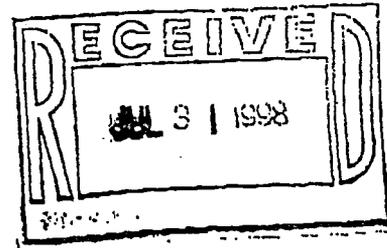
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 1

JOHN F. KENNEDY FEDERAL BUILDING
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02203-0001

July 28, 1998

James Shafer, Remedial Project Manager
U.S. Department of the Navy
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
Northern Division
10 Industrial Highway
Code 1823, Mail Stop 82
Lester, PA 19113-2090



Re: Human Exposure to contaminated soil at the Old Fire Fighter Training Area

Dear Mr. Shafer:

Thank you for your letter dated July 21, 1998 where you presented the Navy's analysis of predicted child blood lead levels when exposed to soils at the Old Fire Fighter Training Area ("OFFTA"). As discussed with you on several occasions, EPA respectfully disagrees.

I raised the issue about children's exposure to contaminated soils at the OFFTA to you in April 1998. EPA was also involved when the Day Care Center was closed in 1994. On August 6, 1993, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry issued a health assessment for NETC that evaluated all Installation restoration sites, including the OFFTA. Their report indicated that exposure to soils at the OFFTA could result in cancer-related and adverse non-cancer health effects. Page 72 of the health assessment states that the "population most at risk from exposure at the Old Fire Fighter Training Area is children." Lead, cadmium, arsenic, PAHs, and PCBs were identified as contaminants of concern. Since no cleanup actions have been completed since 1994, site conditions are virtually the same. The Remedial Investigation is not yet complete. It is therefore unclear why activities substantially similar to the existence of a Day Care Center have resumed.

Given that the area is polluted with several contaminants, it is disconcerting that the Navy's recent analysis focused solely on lead. EPA's concern regarding use of the site for childhood recreational activities is not based solely on lead contamination. In fact, we note that concentrations of other inorganics, PCBs, and semivolatile organic compounds in the surface soils are elevated in several surface locations across the OFFTA. Subsurface soil and groundwater contamination is also present at the site.

If the public discovers there is contamination at the play area and perceives a health risk, difficulties could be encountered. The Navy should be prepared to defend its assessment of health risks and be able to answer questions about the decision to locate the youth center at OFFTA, contamination levels, and health risks.

EPA reviewed the 1994 human health risk assessment ("HHRA") and does not believe that the evaluation was conservative enough for the following reasons: 1) current EPA guidance recommends that 400 mg/day be used for the reasonable maximum exposure for incidental ingestion of soil for children (*see* EPA's 1997 Exposure Factor Handbook) (the 1994 HHRA used 100 mg/day; 2) the number of days of exposure was quite low; 3) mixing of surface and subsurface that could occur during construction was not assessed; 4) inhalation routes were not assessed (*Note:* beryllium is a potent carcinogen when inhaled and was detected in the surface soils); 5) dermal exposure contributions were underestimated because only a limited number of contaminants were quantified; and 6) potential risks of fire from underground waste oils were not assessed.

As you know, the Navy's relative risk ranking evaluation submitted to EPA on December 2, 1997, ranked the site as "High." In fact, the worksheet for this site states that "...known pathways include groundwater, surface water, sediment, and soil..." and "...receptors include both human and ecological..." The groundwater, sediment ecological marine, and soil categories were all ranked as "high" and therefore contributed to an overall site ranking of "high."

The *Source Removal Evaluation Report* dated January 1998 indicated that the Navy would not pursue a removal action because field inspections revealed site-wide subsurface contamination instead of a discrete source area. Soil and groundwater contamination was determined to be ubiquitous in the subsurface and near water table, but surface soils - where human health exposure is likely to occur - were not adequately characterized in the source removal evaluation. Petroleum, semivolatile organic carbons, and metals were all detected in relatively high concentrations in the subsurface soils. Semivolatile organic carbons were also very high at one sediment sample (SS-1). Test pit 4 revealed the presence of what appeared to be asbestos containing material. PCBs (Aroclor 1254), at a concentration of 120 µg/kg, were also detected in the surface soils at this location, and at 540 µg/kg in the surface soils at MW-10. In EPA's letter dated February 6, 1998, EPA requested additional characterization of the surface soils. Such information has not yet been provided and has been deferred to the RI (*see* letter from Donald Conan dated July 2, 1998).

EPA continues to be concerned about unrestricted access to contaminated areas at NETC, including the OFFTA. Use of the OFFTA site as a military youth activity center inordinately increases actual or potential exposure to human populations. Further, I note that my question regarding whether potential adverse human health effects have been disclosed to the parents or guardians of the children playing at the OFFTA remains unanswered.

EPA's guidance does not make it mandatory to use the average surface soil lead concentration in the IEUBK model. Given that the site access is unrestricted, it is possible to have exposures to specific areas within the OFFTA. On page 8 of the April 17, 1998 issue of the *Newport Navallog*, two 5 year old children are depicted playing at Katy Field, Coaster's Harbor Island. The article also reported that youths from ages five to twelve engage in indoor and outdoor activities at the Military Youth Activities School. On May 13, 1998, EPA reported its results from running the

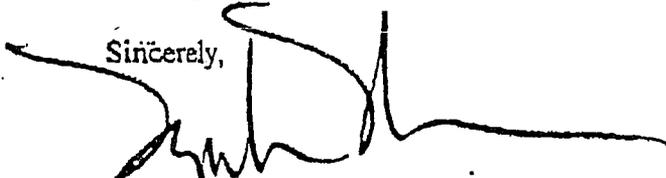
TEUBK model. We noted that exposure to a site-wide average concentration of lead (138.71 $\mu\text{g/g}$) is deemed to be acceptable, but that exposure to soils at the maximum lead concentration (2970 $\mu\text{g/g}$) for all age groups between six months and six years exceeded the 10 $\mu\text{g/dL}$ blood lead level and therefore could cause adverse health effects. Further, we note that the RI Direct Exposure Criteria of 150 mg/kg was exceeded in three areas (2790 mg/kg at FF-M111; 372 mg/kg at FF-M101; 349 mg/kg at FF-SS30).

Preschool-age children and fetuses are usually the most vulnerable segments of the population for exposures to lead (ATSDR, 1988). This increased vulnerability results from a combination of factors including: 1) the developing nervous system of the fetus or neonate has increased susceptibility to the neurotoxic effects of lead; 2) young children are more likely to play in dirt and to place their hands and other objects in their mouths, thereby increasing the opportunity for soil ingestion; 3) the efficiency of lead absorption from the gastrointestinal tract is greater in children than in adults; and 4) nutritional deficiencies of iron and calcium, which are prevalent in children, may facilitate lead absorption and exacerbate the toxic effects of lead.

Studies on the effects of lead in children have demonstrated a relationship between exposure to lead and a variety of adverse health effects. Several studies have noted observed relationships between environmental lead concentrations and body lead burdens in young children. The change in blood lead per 100 $\mu\text{g/g}$ soil lead ranges from 0.1 to 11.1 (Reagan and Silbergeld, 1989). (Note: 9 of the 40 samples at OFFTA exceed 100 $\mu\text{g/g}$). These effects include impaired mental and physical development, decreased heme biosynthesis, elevated hearing threshold, and decreased serum levels of vitamin D. The neurotoxicity of lead is of particular concern because evidence from prospective longitudinal studies has shown that neurobehavioral effects, such as impaired academic performance and deficits in motor skills may persist even after blood lead levels have returned to normal (Needleman, 1990).

In summary, EPA does not believe that it is appropriate to use contaminated areas as recreational areas for children. EPA believes that uncertainties exist in the current data and assessments for the OFFTA and caution is warranted when selecting uses for the site. We should discuss remedial and site management options for the site. I look forward to working with you and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management toward the cleanup of the OFFTA. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (617) 573-5777 should you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,



Kymberlee Keckler, Remedial Project Manager
Federal Facilities Superfund Section

cc: Paul Kulpa, RIDEM, Providence, RI

* Melissa Griffin, NETC, Newport, RI
Mary Sanderson, USEPA, Boston, MA
David Peterson, USEPA, Boston, MA
Cindy Hanna, USEPA, Boston, MA
Beth Timm, ATSDR, Boston, MA
Jennifer Stump, Gannet Fleming, Harrisburg, PA

REFERENCES

- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) (1988). The nature and extent of lead poisoning in children in the united States: A report to Congress, July 1988.
- Needleman H. L., *et al.* (1990). The long-term effects of exposure to low doses of lead in childhood: An 11-year follow-up report. *New England Journal of Medicine* 322(2):83-8.
- Reagan P. L. and Silbergeld E. K. (1989). Establishing a health based standard for lead in residential soils. In: Hemphill and Cothorn, eds. Trace substances in environmental health, Supplement to Volume 12, (1990) of Environmental Geochemistry and Health.



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

NAVAL STATION, NEWPORT
11 CAPODANNO DRIVE
NEWPORT, RI 02841-1522

IN REPLY REFER TO

5090

Ser 40E/425

Oct. 27, 1998

Kymerlee Keckler
US Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Facilities Superfund Section
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
Boston, Massachusetts 02203-0001

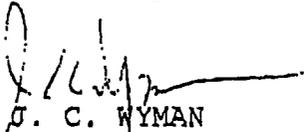
Dear Ms. Keckler:

I am writing in response to your letter of 28 July 1998, concerning the potential exposure of children to contaminated soils at the Old Fire Fighter Training Area (OFFTA). Although we disagree on many technical points, we have decided to err on the side of caution and safety and enhance controls at the site.

We propose installing a perimeter fence and replacing the first two feet of topsoil with clean fill in the area adjacent to Building 144. The size of the area to be excavated and replaced with clean fill may be as much as two acres depending on the availability of funds. The fence will be five to six feet in height and restrict access to all areas that remain unexcavated. The fence will be marked with signs every 100 feet noting "Authorized Access Only". As an interim measure I have directed all Navy personnel to discontinue recreational use of the site until permanent controls are in place, which we estimate will take approximately 60-90 days.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Melissa Griffin at (401) 841-6375.

Sincerely,



J. C. WYMAN
Captain, U. S. Navy
Director for Public Works

By direction of the Commanding Officer

Copy to: NORTHNAVFACENCOM Lester PA (J. Shafer, Code 1823)

PATRICK J. KENNEDY
1ST DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND

WASHINGTON OFFICE
212 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
C222 225-4911
FAX: (202) 225-2390

MAIN OFFICE
208 MAIN STREET, SUITE 600
PAWTUCKET, RI 02860
(401) 729-6800
(401) 352-5777
FAX (401) 729-0400



NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
RESOURCES COMMITTEE

MEMBER
PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN CAUCUS
NEW ENGLAND CAUCUS
ITALIAN-AMERICAN CAUCUS
FRIENDS OF IRELAND
OLDER AMERICANS CAUCUS
LAW ENFORCEMENT CAUCUS

**Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

October 28, 1998

Secretary John Dalton
U.S. Department of the Navy
B324-A RHOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Secretary Dalton,

I am writing to urge immediate action to ensure the safety of all the children who have been using Katy Field, a park owned and supervised by the Naval Command in Newport. The park is located within my Congressional District.

In the late 1980s, the park was declared a Superfund site and remains one of the many contaminated areas on the base. At issue is whether or not Katy Field, and the recreation center there, is suitable for use by children, who are often more sensitive to harmful environmental hazards.

On October 9, 1998, the Navy, at the request of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, closed Katy Field to children. But sadly, it is my understanding that it will be at least 60 to 90 days before a fence is erected around the park, which will serve as a first line of defense in protecting our children from the apparent contaminants.

To be sure, the EPA is quite concerned about this situation, as the area may contain harmful levels of lead, cadmium and arsenic, among other toxins. In fact, I have learned that the EPA is considering legal actions to prompt the Navy to act.

As a member of the House National Security Committee, I am deeply troubled by this matter. Common sense dictates that if there is any chance that even one child is threatened by the park, the Navy should take immediate steps to address the issue.

While I am more than willing to entertain further scientific study to determine if the park is indeed dangerous to human health, I want to make it clear that I will not endorse any delay in the matter. We simply must protect first and study second.

Clearly, there is a fundamental difference of opinion between the Navy and the EPA. Although I deeply respect the judgements of both agencies, I choose to opt on the side of extreme caution. We should remember that we are talking about an area that qualified for the Superfund and has yet to be fully remediated.

Simply put, Mr. Secretary, let's get this fence built NOW rather than wait any longer, and keep our children safe. Simply posting a notice that the park is closed to children is not enough.

I am also concerned about the fact that despite the EPA warnings, children have been allowed to play at the park until earlier this month.

I am requesting that the Navy offer immediate testing at its medical facilities to all children who have played at the park and whose parents are seeking such assurances that their children may have been exposed to these contaminants. Such tests will surely help to ease the minds of Navy parents who are quite likely very concerned upon learning of the park's closing.

Thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this matter. I look forward to a response and subsequent briefings.

Sincerely,



Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress

cc: Commanding Officer A. Cheryl Oakleaf,
Naval Station Newport
Carol Browner, EPA Administrator

PATRICK J. KENNEDY
1ST DISTRICT, RHODE ISLAND

WASHINGTON OFFICE
312 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
DIXIE 225-6514
FAX: (202) 225-3202

MAINE OFFICE
208 MAIN STREET, SUITE 600
PORTLAND, ME 04102
PHONE 725-8000
FAX 725-8072
CELL 725-5428



NATIONAL SECURITY COMMITTEE
RESOURCE COMMITTEE

MEMBER
PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN CAUCUS
NEW ENGLAND CAUCUS
ITALIAN-AMERICAN CAUCUS
FRIENDS OF IRELAND
OLDER AMERICANS CAUCUS
LAW ENFORCEMENT CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
October 28, 1998

Administrator Carol Browner
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
8th Floor, West Tower
401 M. Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Browner,

I want to inform you that I have contacted Secretary of the Navy John Dalton in regards to the safety of Katy Field, which is a park in Rhode Island that is owned and supervised by the Naval Command in Newport. The park is located within my Congressional District.

My concerns with the Navy's actions are addressed in the attached letter to Secretary Dalton. Although the Navy closed the park on October 9 after repeated warnings from the EPA about the presence of toxic chemicals dangerous to children, I have requested that Secretary Dalton take steps to ensure that a fence is immediately erected to keep children out of the park. I have also requested that the Navy conduct health testings of all children whose parents request it.

I strongly support the EPA's position in this matter, and I encourage your agency to take the appropriate action to ensure the safety of these children.

I am respectfully requesting you provide me with the draft report that has been prepared by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry which updates the health risks at Katy Field. I would appreciate this report and any other materials on this matter, as well as being apprised of all future developments.

Thank you in advance for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Kennedy
Member of Congress

cc: John DeVillars
EPA Regional Administrator

To: SMTP GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<pkulpa@dem.state.ri.us>], SMTP
GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<BROWN.RUDY@epamail.epa.gov>], SMTP
GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<HANNA.CYNTHIA@epamail.epa.gov>], SMTP
GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<HOUSE.LOUISE@epamail.epa.gov>], SMTP
GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<PETERSON
From: "KYMBERLEE KECKLER" <KECKLER.KYMBERLEE@epamail.epa.gov>
Cc: SMTP GATEWAY@NORTHDIVCOM[<KAUFMAN.ALICE@epamail.epa.gov>]
Bcc:
Subject: EPA's statement FYI
Attachment: Headers.822
Date: 11/17/98 11:45 AM

EPA is concerned about continuing exposure to surface soils at the Old Fire Fighter Training Area (*OFFTA*), commonly referred to as Katy Field. The site is currently under Superfund investigation.

Several areas in the surface soils at OFFTA have not yet been sampled. The Navy is planning to collect over 40 samples this week. This data will enable EPA, ATSDR, and the Navy to better assess potential health risks from OFFTA.

Owing to subsurface soil and groundwater contamination that is widespread across the OFFTA, remedial action under Superfund is likely. It is possible that this contamination could migrate to Narragansett Bay and cause adverse ecological effects. An ecological risk assessment of the area adjacent to OFFTA will be issued in February 1999.

EPA is pleased that the Navy has restricted access to Katy Field while the investigation is underway. The remedial investigation is scheduled to be complete in March 2000.

The following is not part of our formal statement, but the Navy should be aware of these issues in order to better prepare for the upcoming public meetings.

The areas of disagreement include 1) interpretation of the 1994 draft final risk assessment results, and 2) parameters and assumptions used in the 1994 HHRA. If the Navy decides to discuss these issues, claim that the risk assessment showed that the risks were acceptable, or that the assumptions were conservative, EPA will respond with our alternative interpretation. As EPA has indicated to the Navy before, we believe that the 1994 risk assessment underestimated risks because 1) the quantity of soil used for incidental ingestion was low; 2) the number of days of exposure was quite low; 3) mixing of surface and subsurface that could occur during construction or installation of recreational equipment was not assessed; 4) inhalation routes were not assessed; 5) dermal exposure contributions were underestimated; and 6) the 1994 HHRA did not present a total risk for cancer or non-cancer (exposure pathways were not added).

It is important to note that the 1994 risk assessment calculated risks for

the Future Day Care RME scenario and for the Current/Future Recreational RME scenario that are both actionable under Superfund (Tables 6-1 and 6-2). Additionally, OSHA regulations require medical monitoring when there are thirty days or more of exposure.

EPA and the Navy also disagree over how to appropriately run the IEUBK model. EPA maintains that it is appropriate to use the model on hot spot areas that could be exposure areas. Typically, data from a well characterized exposure area are used as model inputs. The model was developed for a 1/4 acre residential yard.

EPA and the Navy also disagree over what chemicals are contributing to risk at the site. EPA maintains that it is not solely lead. Arsenic, carcinogenic PAHs, and TCDD drove the human health risks in the risk assessment. PAHs in soil can make arsenic more mobile. EPA (and ATSDR) and the Navy also disagree over possible sediment exposure. EPA, RIDEM, and ATSDR believe that a child could play in the sediments/sand next to the site. These sediments are contaminated. Risk from sediment exposure was actionable per EPA's HHRA.

Neither EPA nor RIDEM concurred on the 1994 RI. In fact, EPA specifically stated in our August 13, 1994 letter that EPA does not concur because our comments on the draft were not addressed and because an ecological risk assessment was not included. Since the RI is not yet complete and many EPA comments have not been resolved, the human health risk assessment may need to be reissued. This is particularly true if the Navy is to make public health decisions based on the results of the risk assessment - which was certainly not the intent of the 1994 risk assessment. Since there is already an actionable risk at the site under Superfund, the Navy can proceed with an analysis of remedial alternatives.



**Draft Statement on
EPA's Position for the Cleanup of Katy Field and the Protection of Children
November 23, 1998**

For decades, the former Fire Fighter Training Area of the U.S. Naval Station Newport was used for fire fighting practice. Waste oils and spent solvents were poured on the ground, ignited and then put out during fire training exercises. Preliminary sampling data from the early 1990s of the underlying soils detected petroleum byproducts from fire fighting operations and revealed levels of lead, arsenic, PAHs, PCBs and other toxic substances in the soils. These contaminated soils have since been covered with fill and grass planted. In 1989, the Naval Station Newport was added to the National Priorities list, commonly known as the Superfund.

Progress has been made in the ensuing years to identify the nature and extent of contamination at the site. The 5 ½ acre area known as Katy Field, the site of the fire training area, is still being studied. In 1997 the Navy found widespread subsurface contamination and pipes containing waste oil. Test pits were found to contain metal strapping, concrete, rubble, asbestos, soils laden with petroleum products and a strong petroleum odor in many areas.

Katy Field continues to pose challenges for environmental policymakers at the EPA, Navy and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). While all acknowledge the progress in studies and analyses, we are far from understanding the full scope of contamination both in the first two (2) feet of cover and the deeper buried soils where contamination is known to exist. While the Navy is on schedule with studies of the site and long term cleanup measures to be taken at the Naval Station, but under that schedule a final cleanup decision will not be final until March, 2002.

The agencies differ on the interpretation and significance of data already collected. EPA is unable to accept the conclusions drawn by the Navy that the Katy Field area is "lead-safe" and has written those concerns to the Navy. The health policy agencies have raised concerns about the lack of sufficient data on which to make health claims. EPA agrees, however, that the probability of there being a risk of illness to children who played at Katy Field this summer is

low but continued intensive use of the field as a playground and picnic area is unwise, citing again the need for additional sampling.

The use of Superfund lands that are not yet cleaned up intense recreational use such as a day care center, youth center, or day camp, defies common sense. The lack of data needed to determine if children are at risk of illness because of exposure to buried and potentially surface level contamination warrants the EPA's decision to keep the park and picnic areas off-limits to families and children. To do anything less would be a breach of EPA's responsibility to these families and at odds with the agency's mandate to protect people and the environment from environmental risks.

If at the conclusion of the current sampling EPA finds there to be no health risks associated with the exposure to identified chemicals, relying on analysis and recommendation by government health scientists from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), Rhode Island Department of Health, and EPA's own toxicologists, then the agency's only error would have been in providing too much protection for the children who would have played at Katy Field. When it comes to making decisions that may affect the health of individuals, the EPA will always choose to err on the side of caution. EPA's position on this is firm. Until gaps in the data are filled, and the analyses are complete, access to Katy Field for recreational use should continue to be restricted. Further, it is EPA's position that information be provided to the park visitors, families and others regarding what is known about contamination of the area and about future plans for cleanup and renovation.

EPA is engaged in active dialog with the Navy, RI DEM, and ATSDR in resolving issues concerning data needs, data interpretation and future cleanup decisions for the Naval Station Newport. It is critical that this open communication continue as the agencies attempt to reach agreements that best set a course of action for the future while protecting the health and well being of base families and visitors. Integral to those conversations will be regular meetings and discussions with the representatives that serve on the Restoration Advisory Board and others in the community.



I want to thank Representative Patrick Kennedy for his involvement in the issues at the Naval Station and for organizing this forum tonight.

JOHN H. CHAFEE, RHODE ISLAND, CHAIRMAN

FRANK W. WARNER, VIRGINIA
 GERT SMITH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
 CEMPTHORNE, IDAHO
 S. M. WHOPE, OKLAHOMA
 G. THOMAS, WYOMING
 CHRISTOPHER S. BOND, MISSOURI
 HUTCHINSON, ARKANSAS
 WAYNE ALLARD, COLORADO
 JEFF SESSIONS, ALABAMA

MARK BAUCUS, MONTANA
 DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN, NEW YORK
 FRANK R. LAUTENBERG, NEW JERSEY
 HARRY REID, NEVADA
 BOB GRAHAM, FLORIDA
 JOSEPH L. LIEBERMAN, CONNECTICUT
 BARBARA BOXER, CALIFORNIA
 RON WYDEN, OREGON

JIMMIE POWELL, STAFF DIRECTOR
 J. THOMAS SLITER, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
 WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6175

November 19, 1998

The Honorable Carol Browner
 Environmental Protection Agency
 401 M Street, SW
 Washington, DC 20460

The Honorable Richard Danzig
 Secretary of the Navy
 Department of the Navy
 Office of the Secretary
 The Pentagon
 Washington, DC 20350

Dear Administrator Browner and Secretary Danzig:

I am writing to express my deep concern about the ongoing cleanup at the Old Fire Fighting Training Area at Naval Station, Newport, Rhode Island. This location has been known as Katy Field since it was converted to recreational use in the late 1970s.

The lack of communication between the agencies regarding the Katy Field cleanup is stunning. It appears that EPA and the Navy failed to identify and resolve important differences regarding site use, interim remedial measures, and gaps in data about the extent of contamination. Understandably, the confusion about the actual or potential health risks at Katy Field is alarming to persons who used the facility over the years. At best, the breakdown in the process has caused the affected community serious anxiety that might have been avoided. At worst, many persons who used the site may have been needlessly placed at risk.

The site contamination data has been available to both EPA and the Navy since 1994. EPA and the Navy conducted an on-site briefing at Katy Field for my staff in the summer of 1995. By then, the day care center previously located in building 144 had closed, but the recreational uses continued. Neither the EPA nor the Navy raised any concern at that time about continued recreational use of Katy Field pending selection and implementation of the long-term remedy. All subsequent EPA briefings on the Naval Education and Training Center Superfund site, of which Katy Field is a so-called "area of concern," failed to address the Katy Field cleanup or its continued use for recreation.

In 1998, the chain of events that led to the current controversy occurred. In the late spring, the EPA Region I office "rediscovered" the continued recreational use of Katy Field and raised verbal concerns to the Navy based on the 1994 data. Later in the spring, the Navy reopened building 144 as a youth center and summer day camp, a use similar to the day care

The Honorable Carol Browner
The Honorable Richard Danzig
November 19, 1998
Page 2

center use that ended in 1994. This was done without consulting EPA, or conducting any further environmental testing. Lead testing was conducted later in the summer.

EPA formalized its objections to the continued recreational uses of Katy Field in a July letter to the Navy. The Navy did not formally respond until the issue was on the verge of becoming a public controversy in late October, when the fence to prevent site access was erected.

The failures at Katy Field raise a number of serious questions. How could EPA not have known that Katy Field was still an active recreational facility? Why did EPA not insist, when it rediscovered the ongoing recreational use of Katy Field in the spring of 1998 and perceived a risk based on the 1994 data, on immediate measures to restrict access instead of letting another summer recreation season pass? Why did the Navy continue to allow recreational use of the site in the face of the new EPA objections? Why did the Navy, aware of the renewed EPA concerns in the spring of 1998, intensify the use of Katy Field by reopening building 144 as a youth center and day camp?

Legitimate disagreement over the interpretation of scientific information regarding contamination risks is not unusual. However, differences must be resolved by the federal agencies responsible. This did not happen at Katy Field, and the public is left in doubt about the credibility of the agencies involved.

As you know, I directed my staff to meet with senior Navy, EPA, and Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry personnel in order to discuss future steps at the site. Based on the November 3, 1998, meeting in Washington, it was my expectation that these agencies would work together in communicating information to the public. This is a vital step in restoring the confidence of persons who may have used this site. Unfortunately, the efforts to present a common message to the local community have failed. This must be rectified immediately.

One other important decision was made at the November 3 meeting. The participants recognized that additional testing at the site is needed in order to completely characterize the potential risks that may exist for past or future recreational users of Katy Field. The Navy and EPA agreed to undertake an accelerated sampling and analysis effort, with the goal of finishing by Thanksgiving. This was an aggressive schedule, but the sampling will be completed this week. I am encouraged by the speed of this testing effort.

I understand, as a follow-up to the November 3 meeting, that EPA and the Navy will complete laboratory analysis of the new samples by mid-December. An updated risk assessment for contaminated soils will be completed not later than March 1999. The new data also will be sent to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which will prepare an updated

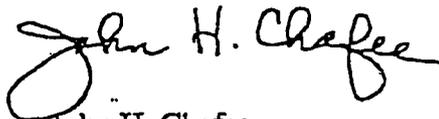
The Honorable Carol Browner
The Honorable Richard Danzig
November 19, 1998
Page 3

public health assessment in January. Every effort must be made to expedite the risk assessment and public health assessment in order to provide current, accurate information to affected citizens.

The people of Rhode Island, Navy personnel, and their families deserve straight talk and appropriate assistance regarding any health risks from use of Katy Field. I urge that the federal agencies involved improve their communication and issue-resolution efforts, and that the troubling failures that have occurred thus far not be allowed to recur.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



John H. Chafee

JHC:cjh

cc: John H. De Villars, Regional Administrator, EPA Region I
Andrew McLeod, Director, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Elise Munsell, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Environment and Safety

Appendix B

News Media Coverage

Katy Field: Inventory of Available Newspaper Coverage

<u>Article Title</u>	<u>Source</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Page</u>
<i>Navy Playground here sits on Superfund site</i>	Newport Daily News	10/28/98	B1
<i>EPA prods Navy to shut playground built on Superfund site</i>	The Providence Journal	10/29/98	B3
<i>Navy closes Superfund playground</i>	Newport Daily News	10/29/98	B6
<i>Parents upset navy let children on contaminated site</i>	Newport Daily News	10/31/98	B7
<i>Navy and EPA team up on playground at Naval Station</i>	Navy News Release	11/6/98	B8
<i>Little League held games at field on site of toxic waste</i>	The Providence Journal	11/6/98	B11
<i>Navy takes heat over Katy Field response</i>	Newport Daily News	11/6/98	B12
<i>Test reveals high lead content at Navy playground</i>	The Providence Journal	11/9/98	B13
<i>Navy to answer questions about contaminated field</i>	Newport Daily News	11/17/98	B14
<i>Navy to answer questions about Katy Field</i>	The Providence Journal	11/17/98	B15
<i>Chafee rips EPA on playground</i>	Newport Daily News	11/20/98	B16
<i>Angry parents heard at forum on Navy playground</i>	The Providence Journal	11/24/98	B17
<i>Parents remain fearful about Katy Field</i>	Newport Daily News	11/24/98	B19
<i>Chafee criticizes Navy, EPA over Katy Field issue</i>	The Providence Journal	11/25/98	B20
<i>Bad situation made worse by Navy, EPA</i>	Newport Daily News	11/27/98	B21
<i>EPA seeks Katy Field information</i>	Newport Daily News	12/5/98	B22
<i>EPA to hear residents' concern over Katy Field</i>	The Providence Journal	12/8/98	B23
<i>Katy Field kids questioned</i>	Newport Daily News	12/10/98	B24
<i>Additional samples from Katy Field arrive from the laboratory</i>	Navy News Release	12/29/98	B25
<i>Navy awaits evaluation of 37 soil tests at Katy Field</i>	The Providence Journal	12/30/98	B29
<i>Parents await translation of tests</i>	Newport Daily News	12/30/98	B30
<i>Parents awaiting analysis of test on contaminated playground at Navy base</i>	Soundings	1/6/99	B32
<i>Public to hear results of Katy Field tests</i>	The Providence Journal	1/20/99	B33
<i>No health risk at Katy Field, federal officials say</i>	The Providence Journal	1/26/99	B34
<i>Playground is safe, officials tell parents</i>	Newport Daily News	1/26/99	B35
<i>Topsoil tests quelled fears over Navy site</i>	Newport Daily News	1/27/99	B37
<i>Two more studies to be released on Katy Field</i>	The Providence Journal	1/27/99	B38
<i>Contaminants at Katy Field pose no health risk, report says</i>	The Providence Journal	3/24/99	B39
<i>Past exposure to soil at Middletown field no health threat</i>	The Providence Journal	4/22/99	B40

The Newport Daily News

53RD YEAR WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1998 50 CENTS

Navy playground here sits on Superfund site

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

NEWPORT — Federal environmental officials have warned the Navy base here that a waterfront park built on a federal Superfund site contains toxic chemicals dangerous to children.

Navy families for years have used the park, Katy Field, on Coasters Harbor Island as a picnic site and playground.

The park was declared a federal Superfund site in the late 1980s and is one of many contaminated areas on the base. In that regard, Naval Station Newport is like military facilities across the country, where soil was

often polluted through actions deemed necessary for national defense.

But the Navy disagrees with the EPA over whether the park is a hazard.

Despite repeated warnings from the EPA, the Navy has continued to operate a recreation center for children at Katy Field.

After prompting from the EPA, the Navy on Oct. 9 closed Katy Field to children, although it will be another month at least before a fence is erected around the park.

But the EPA is worried that children will still be able to get into the park, or that children at the recreation

center might ingest wind-blown contaminants.

The EPA says the area may contain harmful levels of lead, cadmium, arsenic and other contaminants.

"EPA does not believe that it is appropriate to use contaminated areas as recreational areas for children," Kymberlee Keckler, of the EPA's Boston office, said in a July 28 letter sent to Navy officials and obtained by The Associated Press.

The EPA is considering legal actions to prompt the Navy to act, said Alice Kaufman, spokeswoman for the EPA in Boston.

"We are disappointed with how slow the Navy has been moving and

we have grave concerns about there being a youth center on the site," Kaufman said.

The Navy contends children have only limited access to the park and that an Aug. 24 lead study of the recreation area showed a low risk to lead poisoning.

"The risk to human health is acceptable," said Capt. John Wyman, who toured Katy Field on Tuesday with a reporter.

Until 1994, a day care center operated at the site, but it was closed when a federal study indicated exposure to soil there "could result in cancer-



AP photo

The Navy's recreational center for children at Katy Field on Coaster's Harbor Island has raised concerns by the EPA.

SUPERFUND, Page A12

Superfund

Continued from Page A1

related and adverse non-cancer health effects," according to the letter from Keckler.

Were the site outside the Navy base and in the community, it likely would have been shut down much earlier, said Sarah White, spokeswoman for the EPA in Boston.

"At the least, we would have let people know it's under investigation," she said.

The correspondence between the EPA and Navy illustrates how matters relating to health and safety on a military base can get tangled up in the bureaucracies of various government agencies.

Before Katy Field became a picnic area, it was known as the Old Fire Fighting Training Area. From World War II until 1972, the Navy used the grounds to train seamen to handle fires at sea.

Oil, gas and other flammables were set on fire to provide "realistic practice in combating shipboard incendiary conditions," according to Navy documents.

In 1972, the site was bulldozed. In subsequent years new topsoil was added, trees were planted and it was renamed Katy Field, although it still sat atop a Superfund site.

Wyman and David Dorocz, director of the environmental division on the base, argued that any contaminants are buried deep beneath the surface and thus are not a risk. The perception of risk does not necessitate stricter action, they said.

"Our actions are based on technical information," and not public perception, Dorocz said.

Underground storage tanks may still be buried beneath the site, according to the Navy.

The decision to close the day care center at Katy Field was made following a study by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in 1993. The agency, which

assesses health risks, is preparing another report to be released soon.

That report will update the health risks, if any, at Katy Field.

On Tuesday, the Navy was to respond by fax to some of the EPA's concerns. The EPA had received no such fax by late Tuesday afternoon.

The EPA's concern is based on the fact no cleanup has been done since 1994, when the day care center was closed. The EPA is puzzled over why the day care center has since been reopened as a recreation center, which is used by older children less susceptible than toddlers to lead poisoning.

Keckler began investigating again when she read the April 17 issue of the Newport Navallog, a base publication, and saw pictures of children playing on a fire swing at Katy Field, directly over the Superfund site. Another 9-year-old was shown playing the game Patty-Cake.

The pictures accompanied an article on a "fun, fun, fun" youth summer camp program that, Keckler assumes, included activities on Katy Field.

Wyman and Dorocz said the soil in a small, fenced-in area behind the recreation center, formerly a day care, is safe because the old earth was removed and new soil added.

Keckler, who declined to be quoted for this story, noted in her July 28 letter that the Navy had yet to answer whether parents had been warned about "potential adverse human health effects" at Katy Field.

Wyman and Dorocz said a fence will be erected to close off the park, but that it could be up to two months before it goes up.

Remaining questions about health risks could be answered when the Toxic Substances and Disease Registry completes its risk assessment.

EPA prods Navy to shut playground built on Superfund site in Newport

■ Children have been playing on a burial ground for numerous toxic substances.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

NEWPORT — Something about the pictures didn't sit right.

Flipping through the Newport Navallog, the weekly publication of the naval station, last spring, Kymberlee Keckler was surprised to see a photograph of a pair of 5-year-olds playing at Katy Field, a well-tended park for the children of Navy personnel.

A popular spot for family outings, the field sports swings, a jungle gym, outdoor grills and picnic tables, all set along the water at the northeast edge of Coasters Harbor Island.

Keckler knew something else about the 5½-acre parcel. It's also a federal Superfund site, the burial ground of the Navy's former fire-fighting training area, where the presence of lead, semivolatile organic compounds and PCBs, among other hazardous materials, has been known for years.

Turn to **PLAYGROUND**, Page A-10

Playground

Continued from Page One

"EPA does not believe that it is appropriate to use contaminated areas as recreational areas for children," wrote Keckler, a Superfund project manager with the federal Environmental Protection Agency, in a strongly worded letter to Navy officials July 28.

Acting in the wake of that letter and recent conversations with Keckler, the Navy this month closed the park and closed an adjacent youth center, which had opened in June.

In addition, prodded yesterday by a request from U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy to Navy Secretary John Dalton for speedy action, officials at the base will erect a 5- to 6-foot-high chain-link fence around the site today, blocking access to all but authorized personnel.

KENNEDY ALSO has urged Dalton "to offer immediate testing at its medical facilities to all children who have played at the park and whose parents are seeking such tests."

Newport Navy spokesman David Sanders said yesterday that base officials are prepared to respond to all EPA concerns and await the recommendations, due next month, from a new health-risk assessment of the site prepared by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

The Navy insists that its decisions to allow children access to the burial site have been guided properly by the recommendations of a 1993 fed-

eral health-risk assessment. Navy officials maintain that the presence of children is acceptable so long as supervising adults make sure the youngsters don't eat any soil.

But EPA officials flatly disagree with that interpretation of the assessment, saying it warns of ingesting dirt — not synonymous with eating dirt.

"We believe we should take all the precautions that we possibly can in an area where we should not risk the exposure of children," EPA spokeswoman Alice Kaufman said yesterday from Boston.

"Ingesting isn't sitting down and eating mud pies. Your feet are scraping the dust. Your shoes carry the dust home. You touch your shoes. You touch your mouth. You breath the dust. That is a form of ingestion."

"We don't know what is under the playground, and we don't know if it is safe," Kaufman continued.

"I don't know how much the parents know, and that's part of my concern. Parents need information to know if they should be concerned. We are not willing to accept the risk until we have more data about soil levels."

Keckler found it disconcerting that the Navy's defense of siting a playground on a hazardous-materials site rested solely on its examination of lead contamination, when the site is the repository of numerous toxic substances, including arsenic, cadmium and beryllium, all dangerous to children.

KATY FIELD was dedicated in July 1976, four years after all of the

structures of the firefighting training area, a World War II-era facility, were demolished.

Oil and gasoline were routinely spilled and ignited at the site so naval firefighters could train in conditions that simulated dangerous ship-board fires.

The concrete pads with burning pits and the outdoor compartments that simulated sections of a ship were destroyed and buried on the grounds, where a large rolling berm — now grassy and speckled with shrubs — is believed to hold debris.

Contamination of the area was first suspected in 1983. Navy spokesman Sanders said, when the base undertook its first comprehensive look at potential hazardous-

waste sites on its Aquidneck Island properties.

The Navy operated a daycare facility in a modest one-story building at the site for many years, even after oil was discovered in subsurface soil in 1987 during the facility's expansion.

THE CENTER CLOSED in 1994, after a federal study determined that exposure to the soil there "could result in cancer-related and adverse

noncancer health effects," Keckler wrote in July, and that the population most at risk from exposure is children.

The park is one of 12 Superfund sites in various stages of study and cleanup on Navy property on the west side of Aquidneck Island, according to David Dorocz, the director of the environmental division at the Navy complex.

Dorocz believes that the site is safe, with most of the contaminants

well below the surface. He has brought his own children there to play.

But EPA officials want to err on the side of caution.

"The daycare center was closed in 1994 at our urging because we knew it was not safe for children to play where there was surface-level contamination," EPA's Kaufman said. "Our concerns have not changed."

Superfund sites set for cleanup

crete, asphalt and wood. May 2005.

■ Naval Undersea Warfare Center Disposal Area: 5 acres containing scrap lumber, tires, wire cable and empty paint cans. November 2003.

■ Old Fire Fighting Training Area: 5.5 acres formerly used for ship compartment firefighting training exercises. Oil and gasoline used to fuel fires; structures demolished and buried on site. March 2002.

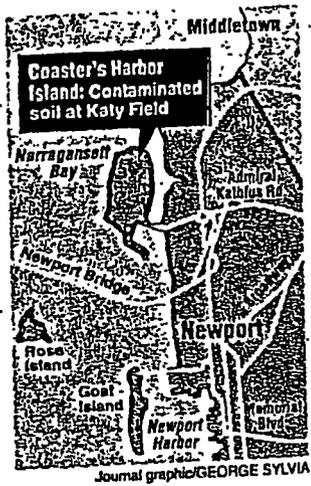
■ Gould Island: 55 acres about 1.5 miles offshore, formerly used for torpedo test firing, overhaul and storage. June 2006.

■ Dorecktor Shipyard: 41 acres leased to the Rhode Island Port

Authority and sublet to Robert E. Dorecktor, 1979-92. Sandblast grit and paint wastes. May 2000.

■ Melville Landfill North: 10 acres, now privately owned. Navy responsible for cleanup of domestic refuse, spent acids, waste paints and PCBs. Completion date to be announced.

■ Tank Farms 1-5: Each site 40 to 90 acres bearing 53 concrete or steel underground and above-ground storage tanks, with 100-million gallon storage capacity. Completion dates staggered from December 1998 to February 2005.



Journal photo/FRIEDA SQUIR

CONSULTATION: Dave Dorocz, director of the environmental division at the Newport Naval Station, consults with Melissa Griffin, restoration program manager, about the future of Katy Field.

2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176

Navy closes Superfund playground

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

PROVIDENCE — Officials at the Newport Navy base have decided to shut down and build a fence around a park built on a contaminated Superfund site where children play.

The Navy has been warned by the federal Environmental Protection Agency for months about possible health hazards to children.

The decision was made Wednesday after a story by the Associated Press, which prompted U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy to rush off a letter to Navy Secretary John Dalton.

Kennedy, D-R.I., said he was "deeply troubled" that commanders at the Navy base have allowed children to play in Katy Field, which fed-

eral environmental officials say is contaminated with lead, cadmium, arsenic and other toxins.

"We simply must protect first and study second," Kennedy wrote in the letter, which was also sent to Carol Browner, head of the EPA in Washington.

Navy officials have maintained the park is safe for occasional use, and they did not want to close it until they had evidence to the contrary.

The Navy is awaiting a federal study on the risks the site may pose, said David Sanders, Navy base spokesman. A similar risk assessment in 1993 said, "It was OK to use the grounds as long as the recreation supervisors were aware of the risks of children eating dirt."

But the EPA said Wednesday the Navy should

have erred on the side of caution.

"When children are on a swingset kicking up dust with their feet, as they always do, you could be breathing up contaminants," said Alice Kaufman, spokeswoman for the EPA in Boston.

Navy officials say they will remove about two acres of topsoil from the 5.5-acre park and put up warning signs.

Capt. John Wynman and David Durocz, head of the environmental division on the base, said on Tuesday that children no longer were being allowed on Katy Field.

But footage from television station WLNF Wednesday morning showed children playing on

PLAYGROUND, Page B2

Playground

Continued from Page B1

a swingset there.

Allowing the children in the park Wednesday morning was a mistake and the word was being sent out to Navy personnel to prevent anyone else from using it, Sanders said.

"They were told shortly afterward that they had to leave the area," Sanders said.

Kennedy also urged the Navy to test all children who have played at the park and "whose parents are seeking assurances that their children may have been exposed to these contaminants."

Sanders said he was uncertain whether children would be tested.

Navy families for years have used the park on Coasters Harbor Island as a picnic site and playground.

The site was known as the Old Fire Fighting Training Area, where from World War II until 1972 the Navy trained seamen to handle fires by burning oil, gas and other materials.

The park was declared a federal Superfund site in the late 1980s and is one of many contaminated areas on the base.

Until 1994, a day care center operated at the site, but it was closed when a federal study indicated exposure to soil there could cause "cancer-related" health problems in children.

The EPA's concern is based on the fact no cleanup has been done since the 1994 study. The EPA is puzzled over why the day care center has since been reopened as a

recreation center.

Sanders said the Navy began using the building as a recreation center for children between the ages of 5 and 12, but not for toddlers, who are most susceptible to lead and other toxins because they put their hands in their mouths.

Work on the fence around the area was to begin today.

Local/State

Parents upset Navy let children on contaminated site

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

NEWPORT — Idyllic Katy Field has been closed, but the worry has only begun for some parents whose children played in the park at the Navy base here.

A fence ordered to be erected around the park was to be finished today, preventing children or anybody else from getting in.

Navy brass in Washington ordered the fence up after U.S. Rep Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., raised concern about whether it was safe to play on Katy Field, which is built atop a contaminated Superfund site.

Base officials say Katy Field is safe and that lead levels pose an acceptable risk for occasional visitors. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency strongly disagrees

and says the risk of other contaminants has not been assessed.

Two mothers reached Friday by telephone were not waiting for answers. They planned to get their children tested for lead and other toxins, although they were uncertain how long it would take to get results.

"I would never have brought my child anywhere near that site if I knew it could be contaminated," said the mother of an 11-year-old boy.

Neither woman wanted to be identified out of concern for scaring their children.

The mother of the 11-year-old said she dropped her son off every morning for 10 weeks at a summer youth camp run by the Navy base on Katy Field, which has swing sets, picnic tables and wide grassy areas on

Coasters Harbor Island.

The area was declared a Superfund site in the 1980s, and a day care center built there by the Navy was closed in 1994. The park is on Navy property and is not open to the public.

"You think a day camp on the Navy base has got to be a safe environment," said the woman, who broke into tears.

She estimated at least 50 children participated in the summer recreation program.

Another woman whose daughters also participated in the summer program said she cried when she saw an article by The Associated Press in The Newport Daily News that cited the EPA's concerns.

Navy base officials said they told recre-

ation directors on Oct. 9 that no children should be allowed to play on Katy Field, although it remained open to visitors as late as Wednesday and was being played upon by children.

Navy base spokesman David Sanders said the base planned to notify all personnel and parents about the EPA's concerns regarding Katy Field in the near future. Sanders said that notification had not been made by Friday afternoon.

Construction of the fence around the park began Thursday and was expected to be completed in one day, but Sanders said the work took longer than expected because permits to dig on a contaminated site had to be obtained.

Several parents had called base officials

and their children were being offered tests for lead, arsenic, manganese, beryllium and other toxins, Sanders said. He stressed the children showed no symptoms of illness.

Kymerlee Keckler, the EPA official in Boston who raised concern about Katy Field when she learned children were playing there, said she must undergo monthly tests if she visits Superfund sites such as Katy Field.

Keckler stressed the health risks at the park were slim but warranted erring on the side of caution.

The mother whose daughters played at Katy Field agreed.

"When you're a parent, all you want to do is protect your children. That's why this destroyed me. I feel so violated," she said.

NEWS RELEASE

Naval Station, Newport
Newport, Rhode Island 02841-1513

*PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
61 CAPODANNO DRIVE*

*PHONE (401) 841-3538
FAX (401) 841-2265*

E-Mail: dave.sanders@smtp.cnet.navy.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

November 6, 1998

Release #67

Point of Contact--David Sanders, 841-3538

Navy and EPA team up on playground at Naval Station

There have been a number of press reports about possible soil contamination at Katy Field on Naval Station Newport, R.I. The following is provided to clear up possible misperceptions about the recreational use of Katy Field.

Katy Field was once used as a Navy fire fighting training area. The soil beneath Katy Field contains leftover petroleum byproducts from the fire fighting training operations. The underlying soil was covered with new soil when the fire fighting training area was closed.

In 1994, the Navy completed a study to evaluate the potential health risk presented by any possible contaminants in the area. The study, called a risk assessment used the results of tested soil samples following standard EPA procedures. The study reached the following conclusions:

- more -

- If construction or excavation of this underlying soil were to take place, some subsurface contaminants could present a possible health risk to workers; therefore excavation at Katy Field should be prohibited. There was no excavation involved with the relocation of the Youth Activities Center.
- Some contaminants may migrate beneath the surface and move toward the harbor; therefore the Navy and EPA are conducting a study to determine if there are any unacceptable risks to the harbor area adjacent to Katy Field.
- The study found that the surface soils were deemed to be within a safe level for current recreational use. In addition, the Navy recently completed a lead survey conducted by a State of Rhode Island certified lead inspector. The survey, which included soil and wipe samples from recreational equipment, reported that there was no lead hazard using the term "lead safe."

However, with the opening of the Youth Activities Center, EPA wants to be sure the site is safe for more intensive use by children. Therefore, the EPA and Navy have agreed to conduct additional sampling and determine the appropriate assumptions based on new standards, for how many days each year, and how many years, children may be in contact with the soil. The risk assessments use conservative assumptions for how much soil might be ingested by a child. In most situations, children don't eat

soil, but small amounts of soil might be ingested from hand-to-mouth contact. Since Katy Field is a grassy area and there is minimal bare soil, the Navy believes that there is no cause for concern for children who have been using the field.

To provide for the time required for the sampling and assessing the results, the Navy has restricted access to the site by putting up a fence.

The Navy Environmental Health Center is in consultation with EPA and other federal agencies, will be reviewing all the data and assessments to determine the appropriate course of action, if any. Depending on the results, Katy Field could be reopened for use, or the Navy may decide to continue restricted access. The Naval Ambulatory Care Center Newport is available to consult with any concerned military and civilian parents whose children had recent and extensive use of Katy Field.

For more information, please contact the Naval Station Newport, Public Affairs Office, Mr. David Sanders at (401) 841-3538 or the Naval Ambulatory Care Center Newport, Occupational Health Department, Ms. Denise Jobe at (401) 841-3839.

###

Little League held games at field on site of toxic waste

■ About 65 children played up to 10 games at the ballfield on Navy property where hazardous materials have been buried for decades.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — Youngsters with the Middletown Little League played baseball this summer at Katy Field, which sits atop a federal Superfund site, where hazardous materials dangerous to children have been buried for decades, Naval Station Newport and league officials confirmed last night.

About 65 children ages 7 to 9 played up to 10 games at the ballfield in May and June, according to Roger Cyr, who was named league president later in the summer.

Cyr said that the league had more players than its five fields in Middletown could handle.

"A couple of people on the board came forward, one from the Navy, and said we had permission to use that field," Cyr said.

The 5¼-acre park, along the northeast edge of Coaster's Harbor Island, is the burial ground of the Navy's Fire Fighting Training Area, a World War II-era

MIDDLETOWN

Turn to FIELD, Page C 2

Field

Continued from Page C 1

facility where lead, arsenic, PCBs and other toxic substances have been detected beneath the surface.

"We had no idea what was going on with that field and the Navy," Cyr said. "I need answers for the parents who are calling me."

The Navy closed Katy Field and an adjacent youth center on the grounds early last month in the wake of strong warnings from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, in Boston.

Superfund project manager Kimberlee Keckler wrote Navy officials in July expressing the EPA's concern that children were regularly visiting a playground at a contaminated area.

But the Navy kept the facility open, saying that guidelines in a 1993 health-risk assessment allowed children so long as supervising adults made sure they did not ingest soil. The EPA disputes that interpretation.

Prompted by letters from U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy to Navy Secretary John Dalton and EPA Administrator Carol Browner, the Navy erected a 5-to-6-foot chain-link fence around the property a week ago.

Kennedy last night called for a briefing with Navy and EPA officials as soon as possible.

In a letter to Capt. A. Cheryl Oakleaf, the new commander of Naval Station Newport, Kennedy asked the Navy to hold a meeting for concerned parents and Middletown officials to explain the possible risks of any exposure.

Kennedy also wants the Navy to extend to the parents of Middletown Little League players "the same opportunity which will be available to Navy parents to have their children screened" at the Navy hospital.

Cyr, who has a record of all the children who played at the field, said that the meetings and the testing invitation "would be great." Cyr's 8-year-old son played a half dozen games there, he said.

"I understand these concerns," Cyr said. "If the Navy can get together and have a town meeting and tell us there's nothing to be alarmed about, it would put all the Little League parents at ease

and as Little League president. We want to know if everything is okay. We would love for communication to be opened up. There's been no communication."

Navy spokesman David Sanders said last night that base officials will announce in a day or two information on how concerned parents can have their children tested for possible exposure to hazardous substances.

The testing will be done at the Naval Ambulatory Care Center and will be open to the public, Sanders said. The Navy is aware that parents of children who used the field a decade ago may have fresh concerns, along with the parents of Middletown Little League players, he said.

"We certainly wouldn't turn anyone away who has a concern about potential dangers there," said Sanders. "We expect to have a name and a phone number people can contact. That office will answer questions and offer health screening."

The Navy also is expected to release additional information on tests it conducted at the site earlier this summer.

Navy takes heat over Katy Field response

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

A week after the Navy closed a playground it built on a site contaminated with lead, some parents and U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., say officials at the Newport Navy base are moving too slowly to address fears of health risks.

"There's a lot of concerned people out there," said Roger Cyr, president of the Middletown Little League.

Middletown Little League teams played a half-dozen games on a baseball diamond at Katy Field last summer, Cyr revealed Thursday. The Navy previously said only children of Navy personnel, employees and contractors had used Katy Field, which was designated a federal Superfund site in the 1980s because of pollution there.

The Navy has maintained the park posed no undue health risk.

But a draft report obtained late Thursday by The Associated Press showed one area of the park had a lead level 20 times higher than acceptable under state standards for a residential area.

The report by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said a maximum lead level of 2,970 milligrams per kilogram of soil was found in one area of the park. Other areas tested much lower.

Rhode Island officials consider anything above 300 milligrams "a cleanup action level," according to the draft report, dated Oct. 7. A safe level is half that amount or less, according to the report.

FIELD, Page A12

al "presents an unacceptable health hazard to children."

Cyr said it has been frustrating trying to get information from the Navy, which he urged to hold a public meeting to answer questions. He also complained that he learned about potential health risks from newspaper reports, rather than from the Navy.

"I've had two parents call me and ask what's going on over there," Cyr said Thursday. "They asked why this wasn't brought to our attention earlier."

NETC spokesman David Sanders responded to Cyr's criticism by saying the Navy has yet to alert the public or hold a public meeting because information still is being gathered.

"They are gathering information on the potential contaminants on the site so they can answer questions knowledgeably," he said. "We still feel it was a minimal risk for recreational use of the field."

When pressed, Sanders said the Navy plans to offer free health screenings for children who played on Katy Field. He declined to specify when the screenings would begin but said an announcement may be made Monday.

The Navy will set up an office with medical personnel to answer health questions and conduct the screenings, which would be less rigorous than full-fledged tests, Sanders said.

The Navy erected a fence around Katy Field following a story by The Associated Press reporting that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency was concerned that repeated exposure to lead and other toxins at the field could harm children.

No children have been reported sick or injured due to exposure to chemicals at the field.

Several officials from the base flew to Washington early this week to discuss the situation with top Navy brass after Kennedy voiced his concerns to Navy Secretary John Dalton.

Kennedy sent a letter Thursday to base Commanding Officer A. Cheryl Oakleaf, requesting a meeting next week to discuss parents' concerns. The letter urged Oakleaf to hold a public meeting.

Until 1994, a day care center operated at the site, but it was closed when a study commissioned by the EPA indicated exposure to soil there "could result in cancer-related and adverse non-cancer health effects."

'There's a lot of concerned people out there.'

— Roger Cyr
Middletown Little League

Test reveals high lead content at Navy playground

■ The amount of lead at one of the surface test sites is nearly 20 times greater than the state's minimum acceptable level for public health.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

NEWPORT — A draft report on toxic contamination at Katy Field prepared by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry finds that the amount of lead present at one of the surface test sites is nearly 20 times greater than the state's minimum acceptable level for public health.

According to the Oct. 7 report, obtained by the Journal on Friday, 2,970 milligrams of lead per kilogram was measured at 1 of 20

MIDDLETOWN

surface-soil test sites on the property.

Rhode Island's minimum acceptable level is 150 milligrams per kilogram, according to Superfund project manager Kimberlee Keckler, of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, in Boston.

To help picture the quantities involved, a kilogram is equivalent to just over 2 pounds, and 150 milligrams is about the size of a quarter of an aspirin, Keckler said Friday.

Katy Field is a 5/8-acre park on the northeast tip of Coaster's Harbor Island, part of Naval Station Newport. The playground, ballfield and cook-out area rest on a federal

Superfund site, the burial ground of the Navy's former fire fighting training area, where petroleum products were once set ablaze in exercises.

Insisting that the area is safe for supervised youngsters, the Navy has maintained the area as a park for Navy personnel and their children since 1976. But others with ties to the Navy have been allowed access, including Middletown Little Leaguers, who played at the ballfield many times this summer.

Keckler's criticism of what she calls the Navy's slowness to respond to EPA concerns led the Navy to fence off the entire area last month.

The Navy still holds that the area is safe, citing an August survey of lead levels at the site. But the EPA disputes that assertion.

Keckler on Friday said that the data did not meet the EPA's quality-control standards.

The Navy on Friday also reiterated in a news release its contention that a 1994 Navy study "found that the surface soils were deemed to be within a safe level for current recreational use."

Again, Keckler disputed the Navy's stand.

"We have really big differences with the Navy on the 1994 risk assessment, based on the Navy's draft," she said. "We don't know the nature and the extent of the contamination." The 1994 assessment didn't include an analysis of environmental effects.

The October ATSDR draft study concluded that "sampling data is inadequate to

determine the actual risk to children playing in the playground."

The study recommends that the Navy "immediately take action to prevent children from contacting contaminated soils" and recommends additional testing of surface soil.

David Sanders, spokesman for Naval Station Newport, announced Friday that "any concerned military and civilian parents whose children had recent and extensive use of Katy Field" are welcome to consult with the Naval Ambulatory Care Center in Newport.

Sanders said that anyone who needs more information should call Denise Jobe at the center's Occupational Health Department at 841-3839 or Sanders at 841-352.

Navy to answer questions about contaminated field

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

Navy officials will hold a public meeting next Monday in Middletown to answer questions from parents concerned about a contaminated playground closed down last month at the Newport Navy base.

U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., requested the meeting after parents complained they were having difficulty obtaining information from the Navy about Katy Field, which is built on a Superfund site, Kennedy's office said Monday.

The Navy has said the levels of lead and other toxins at the former firefighter training ground on Coasters Harbor Island pose no undue risk to children.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency disagreed for months

'This is all we wanted: Answers.'

— Roger Cyr
Middletown Little League

but was unable to convince the Navy to close the field until the agency's concerns were publicized last month. The Navy subsequently fenced off the field.

In addition to the Navy, EPA officials and representatives from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will speak. A draft report from the Toxic Substances agency indicated one spot in the park contained lead levels 20 times higher than allowable under state health standards.

The Navy plans to announce at the meeting that it will offer free

health screenings to children who played on the field, Kennedy spokesman Larry Berman said.

The Navy initially said only military personnel and the families of Navy contractors had access to Katy Field, but it later was learned the Middletown Little League used a baseball diamond there last summer.

About 104 Middletown children played on the field, said Roger Cyr, league president.

Cyr, who initially was upset that the Navy was providing him little information, said he met last week with officials on base. The Navy has sent a letter to parents of Little Leaguers, Cyr said.

"This is all we wanted: Answers," Cyr said.

The meeting will be held at Middletown Town Hall at 5 p.m.

Navy to answer questions about Katy Field

■ At a public informational meeting Monday, the Navy will meet with government officials on the subject of materials and lead levels at the playground, which is part of Naval Station Newport.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — State, federal and Navy officials will meet with U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy in an informational meeting Monday about the now-closed playground at Katy Field, which sits atop a federal Superfund site at Naval Station Newport.

MIDDLETOWN

The session, which is open to the public, will begin at 5 p.m. in the Town Council Chamber in the Middletown Town Hall, 350 East Main Rd.

Representing the Navy will be Capt. A. Cheryl Oakleaf, the new commanding officer of Naval Station Newport, and Capt. Jon C. Wyman, the director of public works.

Superfund project manager Kymberlee Keckler, of the federal Environmental Protection Agency, also will be present, along with Louise House, of the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Town Council President George L. Andrade Jr. will offer

Field

Continued from Page C 1

remarks on behalf of the community.

Katy Field is a 5½-acre park on the northeast tip of Coaster's Harbor Island, part of Naval Station Newport. The playground, a ballfield and a recreation/cookout area are on the burial ground of the Navy's former firefighting training facility, where petroleum products were routinely set ablaze in exercises.

Saying that the site is safe for youngsters with supervision, the Navy has maintained the area as a park for Navy personnel since 1976. But others have been granted access, including the Middletown Little League, which played at the ballfield many times this summer.

The ATSDR has prepared a draft report that found that the amount of

lead present at one of the surface test sites at Katy Field is nearly 20 times the state's minimum acceptable level for public health.

EPA's Keckler has been critical of the Navy's response to federal concerns. Her position, backed by Kennedy, led the Navy to fence off the entire area last month.

Kennedy requested the public meeting after he learned that the young ballplayers had used the field.

"It is critical that the parents of the Middletown Little Leaguers and Navy families whose children have used the field be offered the opportunity to ask questions and hear all the facts from environmental experts," Kennedy said yesterday.

"The EPA and the Navy will both have several officials present to discuss the concerns and offer the latest updates regarding planned health screenings for the children and all other

issues related to the closing of the field."

The Navy announced last week that "any concerned military and civilian parents whose children had recent and extensive use of Katy Field" are welcome to consult with the Naval Ambulatory Care Center in Newport.

Anyone who needs more information should call Denise Jobe at the center's Occupational Health Department at 841-3839 or David Sanders, spokesman for Naval Station Newport, at 841-3528.

Sanders said yesterday that the Navy, EPA and the state Department of Environmental Management have agreed on the location of 35 additional test sites for samples of soils down to a depth of one foot, as well as from the beach area that lines a portion of the field.

"We hope to have the additional testing done by mid December, with results back by March 1," Sanders said.

Chafee rips EPA on playground

■ Rhode Island's senior senator says the federal agency must share the blame with the Navy, because the EPA failed to act when it was discovered that area children were playing on Katy Field, a Superfund site.

B16

By Paul Tolme
Associated Press

PROVIDENCE — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency should share the blame along with the Navy for allowing children to play on a contaminated park at the Newport naval complex, according to U.S. Sen. John Chafee.

The EPA should have insisted that the Navy bar children from the field in the spring, when it discovered Katy Field was being used for recreational activities, Chafee said in a letter Thursday to EPA head Carol Browner and Navy Secretary Richard Danzig.

"The failures at Katy Field raise a number of serious questions," wrote Chafee, R-R.I.

He blamed a lack of communication between the EPA and the Navy for, at best, causing "seri-

ous anxiety" among parents.

"At worst, many persons who used the site may have been needlessly placed at risk," he wrote.

EPA officials have said previously that the agency was unable to take stronger action to close the park because it is on Navy property, giving the EPA less authority.

EPA spokesman Peyton Fleming defended his agency's role in helping to close Katy Field, which is built on a Superfund site on Coasters Harbor Island.

"We believe the EPA has consistently acted in the public's best interest by warning the Navy to keep any area that had potential health risks off limits to the public," he said. "The Navy apparently chose not to heed those warnings,

which is unfortunate."

The Navy built a fence around Katy Field last month after stories by the Associated Press outlined the EPA's concerns about unacceptable levels of lead and other contaminants at Katy Field.

An EPA official in Boston said she discovered in April that the Navy still was allowing children on the field when she saw a Navy base publication with an article about a "youth camp" at Katy Field, where the Navy until 1972 burned gasoline and other flammables to train firefighters.

U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., will hold a public meeting in Middletown on Monday for parents to question Navy and EPA officials about the situation. He has urged the Navy to test

PLAYGROUND, Page C2

Playground

Continued from Page C1

children for contaminants, and the Navy plans to begin offering health screenings soon, according to Kennedy's office.

Concern about Katy Field spread after it was learned the Middletown Little League played many games on a baseball diamond at Katy Field last summer.

A draft analysis based on 1994 data collected at Katy Field showed one area contained lead levels 20 times higher than acceptable under

state law. Even so, no illnesses have been linked to the field.

New tests are being conducted and may shed light on the potential risks at Katy Field.

The test results may be ready by mid-December, according to Chafee's office.

Angry parents heard at forum on Navy playground

■ A panel of medical and environmental experts tries to allay fears about a possible health threat at the contaminated site where children played.

By MICHAEL CORKERY
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — Federal, state and Navy officials faced an angry group of parents last night in a forum about the use of the now-closed playground at Katy Field, which sits above a Superfund site at the Naval Station Newport.

The panel of medical and environmental experts tried to allay fears about a possible health threat, but concern only seemed to deepen after two parents testified last night that their young children showed signs of

- AQUIDNECK ISLAND

chemical exposures after playing in the field this summer.

"This has become a real public relations boondoggle on the part of the Navy," said U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, who organized last night's meeting in Town Hall. "But I can tell you there is nothing that strikes at the heart of a parent than concern for their child's health. We need to find answers. This issue has been blown up because people have been trying to cover their backsides."

Kennedy criticized the way Navy and federal officials have handled the situation, since the public learned that children had been playing on the former burial site for

contaminated material for the Navy's firefighter training facility.

Kennedy blasted Navy officials for not restricting children from using the field, when the Environmental Protection Agency first notified them in July about its concerns of possible health risks.

Kennedy criticized the EPA for failing to raise a red flag sooner. Officials in the EPA's regional office in Boston had been concerned about the "intense" recreational use of Katy field since April, according to Donald Berger, of the EPA.

But Kennedy said the agency was too slow in communicating those concerns to the Navy. The first formal notification from the EPA that Navy officials should not use the field for recreational use came in the letter dated July 28, according to NETC

spokesman David Sanders.

From June to August, about 60 children in the Navy's summer camp used the field for outdoor activities and about 65 children from the Middletown Little League played games on the baseball diamond.

Children involved in the base's day-care program continued to play in the field throughout the early fall, said base commander Capt. A. Cheryl Oakleaf. The Navy fenced off the area last month, after consulting with Kennedy and EPA officials.

"We considered closing the area, but there are degrees that an agency will go to in enforcement," Berger said. "Although we were concerned about the health dangers, it was not something that needed to be done tomorrow, we wanted it done quickly."

The EPA argued that the former burial

ground for the Navy's firefighting training area should not be used as a ballfield or play area for children because the 5.5-acre parcel was known to contain lead, semivolatile materials, and other dangerous chemicals.

The Navy insists that a 1993 federal risk assessment declared the land was safe to use. Navy officials said the presence of children was acceptable so long as they were supervised by adults.

But federal and Navy officials said last night that their data was incomplete and nearly five years old. New tests ordered last week would reveal the latest state of contamination, they said.

"We can't guarantee that there isn't a health threat," said Berger. "But that doesn't mean there is one."

Turn to FORUM, Page C2

Forum

Continued from Page C 1

While the Navy and EPA debated the seriousness of the threat, Sara Gallagher, of Tiverton, said her 8-year-old daughter, who played in Katy field nearly every day this summer, started getting sick.

Gallagher, who was employed by the Navy as a camp counselor, said the doctor told her that her daughter showed signs of arsenic poisoning, including severe headaches, vomiting and weight loss.

"As a counselor, I felt responsible for those children. I was never told about this. I learned about it on the television news," said Gallagher, who has since taken a leave of absence from her job on the base. "Nobody has been willing to give us the appropriate answers."

According to Gallagher, the family's physician found traces of lead, magnesium and arsenic in her blood. But Carole Hossom of the federal agency for toxic substances and disease registry said those substances could be found almost anywhere, not just at Katy field.

Hossom said it was unlikely that the low level of contamination, revealed by the most recent tests of the site, could cause these health problems.

"From a scientific standpoint there is no cause for alarm, but as parents I understand your concern," said Hossom.

Another parent, Suzanne Moniz, of Middletown, was also told by her

'As a counselor, I felt responsible for those children. I was never told about this. I learned about it on the television news.'

—SARA GALLAGER

physician that her 8-year-old son, who played Little League at Katy field this summer, showed signs of chemical exposure.

Moniz said the doctor did not speculate on the source of the toxins found in the boy's blood, but she felt unsettled by news reports that the Little League field was part of a Superfund site.

"It could just be coincidence, but I just don't know," she said.

Both Gallagher and Moniz requested a list of possible contaminants found on the site. Sanders said the Navy and the disease registry would prepare a report detailing possible chemicals and distribute to all physicians in the state by the end of next week.

EPA and naval environmental officials are processing the latest soil samples taken on the site last week. They hope to have the results by the middle of next month. Once those results are released, Kennedy would like to hold another forum to assess the situation in January.

"We need to flush out the real threats," said Kennedy. "It all sounds good tonight, but we need more answers."

Parents remain fearful about Katy Field



Virginia Pittsley of Portsmouth said she plans to take her son, who attended day camp at Katy Field last summer, to a Boston hospital for medical tests. Pittsley said the Navy has not been helpful in providing information.

Navy awaits results of testing on soil

By Phil Sweeney
Daily News staff

MIDDLETOWN — Until soil test results come back next month, the Navy cannot say with certainty that parents have no reason to be concerned about potential health risks for kids who played at Katy Field.

Officials from the Navy and several federal and state environmental agencies said Monday evening they can do little at this point to allay parents' concerns.

"We don't have a definitive picture," Don Berger of the federal Environmental Protection Agency said at meeting with concerned parents at Middletown Town Hall.

He said progress is being made to answer questions weighing on the minds of many parents.

That effort, however, comes far too late to satisfy parents, some of whom have said their children have suffered unexplained headaches and illnesses.

The Navy built a fence around Katy Field on Nov. 1, after a dispute between the Navy and the EPA became public. EPA officials disagreed with the Navy's assessment that the field posed no undue risk to kids playing on it.



The Middletown Town Hall council chamber was packed Monday night for the first public hearing on contamination at the Navy's Katy Field.

Katy Field is considered part of the Superfund site on Navy property on Coasters Harbor Island. The Navy used the site for decades to train firefighters.

Sara Gallagher of Tiverton told the crowded room that her daughter Brittany has had severe headaches since attending a Navy day camp last summer.

"At 8 years old, she should not be having that type of migraine," Gallagher said.

Her daughter has tested positive for lead and arsenic, and Gallagher said a doctor believes Brittany's time spent playing at Katy Field is likely the cause.

Another parent, Virginia Pittsley of Portsmouth, said she worries about her 11-year-old son, who also spent much of the summer at the day camp. Pittsley said she's taking

KATY, Page A12

Katy

Continued from Page A1

her son to Children's Hospital in Boston next week for tests.

Monday's session left Pittsley no less concerned about her son and the other children who played at Katy Field, though she said she was pleased to see environmental experts now involved.

Hopefully they can provide information to parents, she said. "The Navy has been particularly unhelpful," she said.

Carol Husson of the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said evidence compiled up to this point shows no reason for parents to be alarmed.

"There's no indication that anyone would have health problems from being out there," Husson said.

The EPA grew concerned about Katy Field in the spring after learning the Navy was allowing kids to use the playground and ball fields more frequently than in the past. Berger said that, because little was known about the level of the field's contamination, EPA officials worried about that additional use.

The uncertainty, Berger said, led the EPA to consider issuing an order that would have required the Navy to close Katy Field. "If we didn't get cooperation, an order would have been issued," he said.

That concern should not have taken most of the year to be addressed by EPA, argued Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, D-R.I., who requested Monday's meeting.

"They didn't even mandate further testing," Kennedy said sternly.

Kennedy faulted the EPA and Navy for not working to resolve the matter right away. The ensuing press coverage, which triggered understandable panic among parents, amounted to a public relations fiasco, he said.

Parents, showing obvious anxiety



AP photo

Katy Field on Coasters Harbor Island at the Naval Education and Training Center has been closed to public use while the federal Environmental Protection Agency investigates levels of lead, arsenic and other contaminants at the field.

ety that so much remains unknown, asked the environmental officials and medical experts in attendance what their children should be tested for and how much they should worry.

Parents were told there appears to be no reason to fear for the children's safety.

Capt. Jon C. Wyman, director of public works at the Naval Station, said the Navy is concerned about the well-being of those who have used Katy Field, though tests throughout the past two decades have shown no contamination that would pose a serious health risk.

Katy Field was closed off in an attempt to err on the side of caution, Wyman said.

In response to concerns from the EPA and the public, 36 additional soil samples were taken last week. Those results are expected in December, and a full report on the safety of the site's use should be completed by spring, Wyman said.

When those results are in, they will be shared with the public,

Kennedy said.

"We're on track," he said. "We've gotten the tests done."

Kennedy agreed to schedule a follow-up session in early January to help explain the meaning of the test results. "You'll know about every last one."

Sen. John Chafee, R-R.I., joined in the criticism last week with a letter to EPA Administrator Carol Browner and Navy Secretary Richard Danzig. The lack of communication between the EPA and Navy is stunning, Chafee wrote.

"It appears that EPA and the Navy failed to identify and resolve important differences regarding site use, interim remedial measures and gaps in data about the extent of contamination," he wrote.

"At best, the breakdown in the process has caused the affected community serious anxiety that might have been avoided. At worst, many persons who used the site may have been needlessly placed at risk," Chafee said.

Chafee criticizes Navy, EPA over Katy Field issue.

■ Sen. John Chafee says the Navy and EPA should have better handled information about contamination and its risks at the playground.

By VAUGHN WATSON
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — U.S. Sen. John Chafee has strongly criticized the Navy and the federal Environmental Protection Agency, saying both have dragged their feet and lost credibility with the public in the way they handled information about the now-closed playground at Katy Field.

"The lack of communication between the agencies regarding the Katy Field cleanup is stunning,"

Chafee said in a sharply worded letter to Carol Browner, administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency, and to Richard Danzing, Secretary of the Navy.

Chafee fired off the letters on Thursday, four days before federal, state and Navy officials faced angry parents in a forum in Middletown.

Parents and lawmakers assailed the Navy and the EPA on the use of the playground, which sits above a Superfund site at the Naval Station Newport. Chafee did not attend the forum. But in the letters he "rebuked and

Turn to **NAVY**, Page C 2

MIDDLETOWN

Navy

Continued from Page C 1
reprimanded" the agencies.

"Understandably, the confusion about the actual or potential health risks at Katy Field is alarming to persons who used the facility over the years," he said. "At best, the breakdown in the process has caused the affected community serious anxiety that might have been avoided. At worst, many persons who used the site may have been needlessly placed at risk."

Yesterday, speaking from Washington, Chafee amplified his written remarks. "It is a very serious situation, there is no question," he said.

"The two principal players — EPA and the Navy — haven't communicated. You can say that com-

munication has really been terrible.

"The good news is apparently the people who have used this field in the past are unlikely to suffer any adverse health affects because of the use. Nonetheless, that doesn't excuse the Navy and the EPA from communicating better with each other."

The EPA sent its first formal notification to Navy officials on July 28, saying Katy Field should not be used for recreation. From June to August, about 60 children used the field for outdoor activities during the Navy's summer camp, and about 65 children from the Middletown Little League played baseball games there. Children involved in the base's day-care program played at the field in the early fall.

Last month, after consulting with EPA officials and U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, the Navy fenced off the area.

Federal and Navy officials said at the forum that the data they cited from a 1993 risk assessment, which declared the field safe for use, was incomplete and out of date. The agencies ordered new tests last week and said the results would reveal the latest state of contamination. The results are expected next month. The agencies are expected to complete a new risk assessment by January.

Chafee did not want to give a broad-based criticism of the Navy, noting that the federal agency is Aquidneck Island's largest employer. "I am not a Navy basher," he said.

"I don't want to get into an attack on the Navy," he continued. "When somebody makes a mistake, we want to get an understanding and solution to the mistake as soon as possible, not stand around and berate and berate and berate."

Bad situation made worse by Navy, EPA

If it had not been for the press and the involvement of Rep. Patrick Kennedy, children might still be playing at Katy Field.

Investigative reporting by The Associated Press first informed the public that the playground at the Newport Naval Station had been built on a hazardous waste dump, where toxic contamination could threaten the health of children.

The information was not news to the Navy, which was aware of the site, or to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, which also was aware of the potential danger. But until the public — especially parents whose children had used the playground — learned of the potential danger and expressed their anger, neither agency had done anything more than exchange memos. The playing continued and even expanded with a summer camp and Little League.

The EPA and the Navy have botched this situation.

It is important to recognize that there is no direct evidence that any child or adult has been harmed by anything at Katy Field, which was once the site of a Navy firefighters school, where toxic chemicals were used to start and fight fires. The site has been covered with dirt and grass, and may be safe for use by children.

But as both the Navy and the EPA know, "may be safe" is not an adequate standard when it comes to protecting the health of children. Safety tests should have been conducted before the site was used for day care and children's summer activities and then repeated regularly to assure that the buried toxic waste remained buried. The five-year-old tests cited by Navy officials provide no confidence that the area is safe.

Without up-to-date tests, the

Our view

Navy should never have allowed this contaminated property to become a playground.

As long ago as spring, the EPA learned that children were playing on the site and discussed the problem with Navy officials. But no one acted. No official report was sent until July, and even then nothing happened.

It is impossible to understand how Navy officials allowed the playground to continue operating and even expand during the summer after being informed that the EPA considered it unsafe because the ground was filled with toxic chemicals.

It is equally impossible to understand why the EPA did not issue an order to close the playground when the Navy failed to act.

"We considered closing the area, but there are degrees that an agency will go in enforcement," Donald Berger, an official of the EPA in Boston, said at a meeting in Middletown Monday evening.

Considering that the health of children is involved, that statement is no less outrageous than the inaction of both the Navy and the EPA. Now that the problem has become public, new soil tests have been taken; results are expected next month. Kennedy has become involved. That is sure to stimulate action — and far better communication with the public, especially worried parents.

Everyone hopes the test results will show there has been no real danger to children. If that is true, the case will be recorded as a public relations disaster and a failure in decision making. That poor result is the best that can come of this sorry mess.

EPA seeks Katy Field information

Parents' input sought in probe into waste site

By Paul Tolma
Associated Press

PROVIDENCE — Federal environmental officials want to speak with parents whose children played on a contaminated playground at the Navy base in Newport.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency wants to gather more information on how frequently children used Katy Field, which is built on a Superfund site that, according to the EPA, contains lead and other toxins.

"The information we gather will help us determine what kind of a risk there was," Alice Kaufman, an EPA spokeswoman, said Friday.

The information we gather will help us determine what kind of a risk there was.

— Alice Kaufman
EPA spokeswoman

EPA officials will be at Middletown Town Hall from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday.

While the EPA says it was a bad idea for the Navy to allow children on the field, there is no evidence yet that any children have gotten sick. A study to be completed by mid-January should answer many questions about the field's risks.

The Navy has fenced off Katy Field since the EPA's concerns were publicized. Navy base officials have said the field was safe for limited use.

The EPA says the Navy based its risk analysis on the estimate that children might play at Katy Field 10 days out of the year.

But some parents say their children played there all spring and summer.

A government official who did not want to be identified said the EPA feels the Navy is underestimating the amount of time children spent on the field.

Kaufman declined to comment on that assertion.

Navy base spokesman David Sanders said he will release the results of new tests at Katy Field at a public meeting next month.

"We want to get that information to the public to allay any concerns," Sanders said.

In addition to children of Navy parents, the Middletown Little League played on a baseball diamond at Katy Field last summer.

Many angry parents showed up at a meeting held last month by Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., to question why the Navy had not told parents earlier about potential health risks at Katy Field.

EPA to hear residents' concerns over Katy Field

■ A representative of the federal agency will hear concerns from parents and others about possible contamination at the park.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — A representative of the federal Environmental Protection Agency will be at the Middletown Town Hall tomorrow and Thursday for confidential meetings with parents and others concerned about the possible contamination of Katy Field.

Kymerlee Keckler, EPA project manager for Katy Field, will be available from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. to gather information from parents or to answer questions regarding the site history, its contaminants or the present

Turn to EPA, Page C 2

EPA

Continued from Page C 1
investigation of the area.

Katy Field is a 5 1/2-acre park on the northeast tip of Coaster's Harbor Island, part of Naval Station Newport.

The playground, ballfield and cookout area rest atop a federal Superfund site, the burial ground of the Navy's former Fire Fighting Training Area, where petroleum products were once set on fire during exercises.

The Navy closed Katy Field and an adjacent youth center on the grounds in October after strong warnings from the EPA.

Letters from Rep. Patrick Kennedy to Navy Secretary John Dalton and EPA Administrator Carol Browner led to the Navy's installation of a tall chain-link fence around the property later that month.

The Navy has maintained that the area, a park since 1976, is safe for supervised play. The EPA holds that the Navy has been chronically slow in reacting to EPA concerns and failed to act prudently by closing off the area.

Local concern about the possible effects on children from contaminants on the grounds increased last month when it was disclosed that it wasn't only Navy families who had access to the area but Middletown Little Leaguers as well, who played at the ballfield there many times last summer.

Also, a draft report on toxic contamination at Katy Field prepared by the federal Agency for Toxic Sub-

stances and Disease Registry found that the amount of lead present at one of the surface test sites was almost 20 times greater than the state's minimum acceptable level for public health.

A group of angry parents met in Town Hall with state and local officials and representatives of the Navy and the EPA two weeks ago at an informational forum held at Kennedy's request.

Although environmental and medical experts tried to calm parents about a possible health threat to their children, two parents said that their youngsters showed signs of chemical exposure after playing at the field this summer.

Kennedy and Sen. John Chafee have called the matter a public relations blunder on the part of the Navy, and both have criticized the Navy and EPA for not acting sooner and more aggressively in the public interest.

A new round of tests on surface and subsurface soil at Katy Field is now under way. The results will be used to evaluate the health risks to children who played there, according to the EPA. The results are expected to be announced this month.

Information about the use of Katy Field for baseball, summer camp and other recreational uses also will be important in the assessment of the potential risks to children according to EPA spokeswoman Alice Kaufman.

Responses will be kept confidential, she said.

The Town Hall is at 350 E. Main Rd.

MIDDLETOWN

Katy Field kids questioned

EPA seeks information about exposure to toxic playground

By James J. Gillis
Daily News staff

MIDDLETOWN — A handful of parents sat down with federal Environmental Protection Agency officials in Town Hall Wednesday to discuss their children's experiences at Katy Field, the playground closed by the Navy last month because of environmental concerns.

In recent weeks, parents have been looking for answers from the EPA and the Navy. On Wednesday, the federal agency was asking the questions.

Interviewers wanted to know what kind of activities children took part in, how often they visited the field and how long they stayed. They wanted to know if any children dug in the playground's dirt.

"The information we're gathering we're going to put together in a good informational package," said Steve Sorgen, an environmental scientist from the Navy Environmental Health Center in Norfolk, Va. "The positive thing is that the Navy, the state and the EPA are all working together."

Any parents wishing to meet privately with



Jacqueline Marque/Daily News photo

Mary Langlais, left, of Tiverton and Carolyn Warner of Middletown with her daughter, Meghan, 6, met Wednesday with Environmental Protection Agency officials to discuss contamination at Katy Field and its effect on their children who attended a summer day camp there. EPA officials are also available today at Middletown Town Hall.

KATY FIELD, Page A12

Katy Field

Continued from Page A1

the federal officials today may visit Town Hall until 7 p.m. On Wednesday, only a handful took the opportunity.

Two women, Carolyn Warner of Middletown and Kathy Langlais of Tiverton, stopped by. Warner brought her 6-year-old daughter Meghan and Langlais brought her 12-year-old daughter Jennifer.

The girls took part in a three-month camp at Katy Field this past summer. Warner said she wanted to help the EPA and also wanted to see if any new information was available.

"I think they asked some good questions," she said after her inter-

view. "They wanted to know how often my daughter was there, what she did when she was there."

Warner said her family doctor has tested Meghan for any signs of exposure to toxins such as lead and arsenic.

"She turned out negative," Warner said. "I just wonder about the long-term effects."

The Navy closed the field after reports of possible contamination. Some parents said their children contracted unexplained headaches and illnesses after playing at Katy Field.

The Navy built a fence around the field after a dispute between the EPA and the Navy about the field's

safety became public. The Navy contended that the field posed no undue risk for children playing on it.

The EPA has conducted numerous tests on soil samples taken from Katy Field; the results will be released in January.

"We'll know more when the soil tests are in," Warner said. "I'm anxious to hear what was in the soil."

A Navy medical information line has been set up a 841-3839. Sorgen said only 27 people have called in the past five weeks looking for information. "I think most families are going right to their own physicians," he said. "They don't want to break the continuity of their health care service, which I certainly understand."

NEWS RELEASE

Naval Station Newport
Newport, Rhode Island 02841-1513

*PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
61 CAPODANNO DRIVE*

*PHONE (401) 841-3538
FAX (401) 841-2265*

E-Mail: dave.sanders@smtp.cnet.navy.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

December 29, 1998

Release #74

Point of Contact--David Sanders, 841-3538

ADDITIONAL SAMPLES FROM KATY FIELD ARRIVE FROM THE LABORATORY

Laboratory results from the 37 soil samples collected in November at Katy Field, Naval Station (NAVSTA) Newport are very similar to the earlier data collected at the site. The data has been received by the Navy, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM). The results, as yet uninterpreted for potential risk to human health, are also available in the three public libraries on Aquidneck Island. Soil samples were collected from high use areas of Katy Field to better determine the nature of the park's surface soils. The new data will be used in conjunction with existing data to evaluate short-term human health risk at the site. During a November 23rd, town meeting in Middletown, R.I., the Navy and the EPA said that additional samples had been taken

- more -

at Katy Field on NAVSTA Newport to help assess the appropriate use of the field.

The results of the updated risk assessment will be presented to the public during a community meeting to be scheduled for late January. The sampling results have also been forwarded to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ATSDR will review and interpret all the data, then prepare a public health assessment with conclusions and recommendations. ATSDR's assessment is also expected to be completed by late January and will be released to the public during the same community meeting at which the Navy's human health risk assessment will be discussed. It is important to understand the difference in the two assessments. The ATSDR assessment will address past use of Katy Field and describe any public health considerations related to such use. The Navy's risk assessment, when finalized with the addition of data from later samples to be taken at lower depths on the site, will address the long term recreational use of Katy Field and any actions necessary to ensure protection of public health.

Substances found in the surface soil do not appear to be from the previous fire fighting activity, but reflect current use of the site or were present in the soil used to cover the site. Most of the data is below soil screening levels. Screening

levels are conservative levels established for various contaminants to help quickly determine whether further investigation or actions may be needed. In most cases, contaminant levels occurring below screening levels indicate that there is no further action or study needed. Most of the new data collected shows lead levels below the strict RIDEM standard for residential land use. Arsenic was detected at levels that have typically been found in surface soils throughout Aquidneck Island. Benzo(a)pyrene, a combustion product from burning hydrocarbons such as gas, wood, oil or other petroleum products, or charcoal, is ubiquitous in an urban environment. As expected, the highest level was found by the barbecue pits. The new data supports statements made by EPA, ATSDR, and RIDEM experts at the town meeting on November 23rd. At the meeting, these experts stated that there did not appear to be a health risk concern to past users of Katy Field based on the previously collected data. However, ATSDR's final public health assessment will address this issue more conclusively.

A 1994 risk assessment, conducted by the Navy, concluded that recreational use of Katy Field was acceptable for periodic recreational use. However, because of recent changes in the frequency and types of use of the field, EPA recommended that use of the field be restricted pending a re-evaluation of the risk

assessment with updated exposure information. To err on the side of caution, the Navy restricted access to the field while working with the EPA and RIDEM to take additional soil samples and better determine how the field has been used in recent months.

Katy Field is a five-acre site on the northern end of Coasters Harbor Island at NAVSTA Newport. The area was used as a Navy fire fighting training facility from World War II until 1972. During the facility's operation, fuel oils were burned in various structures to simulate shipboard fires. Sailors put out the fires during training exercises. Upon closure in 1972, the training structures were demolished and buried, then the entire area was covered with fresh soil. In 1976, the site was converted to a recreational area with a playground, a baseball field, and a picnic area with an open pavilion and barbecue pits. The site was used for a variety of recreational uses from its dedication on July 4, 1976 until access was restricted in October 1998.

###

Navy awaits evaluation of 37 soil tests at Katy Field

■ The tests are completed, and officials will study the information to determine any risk to human health of people who used the recreation area.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

NEWPORT — Laboratory tests on the 37 soil samples taken last month at Katy Field have been completed, spokespersons for the Navy and the federal Environmental Protection Agency said yesterday.

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

The information has not yet been analyzed to determine the soil's potential risk to human health and its impact on any plans for the future use of the site, they said.

The data is now in the hands of the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which will prepare a public-health assessment that includes its recommendations.

The assessment is expected to be completed by late next month, when the Navy, the EPA and the state Department of Environmental Protection will host a community meeting to announce the conclusions. The date and location of the meeting have not been established.

Katy Field is a 5 1/2-acre park on the northeast tip of Coaster's Harbor Island, part of Naval Station Newport.

The playground, a ballfield and a cookout area rest on a federal Superfund site, the burial ground of the Navy's former fire fighting training area, where petroleum

Katy

Continued from Page C 1

products were once set ablaze during training exercises.

The Navy closed Katy Field and a youth center on the grounds in October after strong warnings from the EPA.

The Navy has held that the area, which had been a park designed for use by Navy personnel and their families since 1978, was safe for supervised play. But the EPA maintained that the Navy was slow to respond to repeated EPA concerns and failed to close off the area until political pressure was brought to bear.

Concern among Aquidneck Island families beyond the Navy has increased last month when it was found that youngsters with the Middletown Little League played many games at the ballfield during the summer.

Upset parents and interested residents packed the Middletown Town Hall last month at an informational forum held at the request of Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy.

The latest round of soil samples was taken not only to inform the public but to satisfy the EPA, which questioned the quality-control of an August survey of lead levels at the site.

The Navy maintained that that study showed the area to be safe, an assertion disputed by the EPA project manager for Katy Field, Kymberlee Keckler.

A draft report on toxic contamination at Katy Field prepared by the ATSDR found that the amount of lead at one of the surface test sites was almost 20 times greater than the state's minimum acceptable level for public health.

The October ATSDR draft study concluded that "sampling data is inadequate to determine the actual risk to children playing in the playground."

The study recommended that the Navy "immediately take action to prevent children from contacting contaminated soils" and called for additional testing of surface soil.

The 37 additional soil samples were taken from the surface and to a depth of 1 foot, at test sites agreed upon by the Navy, EPA and DEM. Samples also were taken from the beach area that lines a portion of the field.

Pete DuBals, acting public affairs officer at Naval Station Newport, said yesterday that copies of the test results would be available at public libraries on the island.

According to reference librarians yesterday afternoon, copies had been received in Middletown and

Portsmouth but not in Newport.

The Navy noted that the ATSDR assessment "will address past use of Katy Field and describe any public health considerations related to such use."

"The Navy's risk assessment, when finalized with the addition of

'We don't want to leave people hanging. We simply want to let people know at this time that yes, we have the data in.'

— MARY SANDERSON,
Environmental Protection Agency

data from later samples to be taken at lower depths on the site, will address the long-term recreational use of Katy Field and any actions necessary to ensure protection of public health," the Navy announced.

Mary Sanderson, chief of the federal facilities Superfund section of the EPA's New England office in Boston, said yesterday that the new round of test results don't look much different from what's been found there in the past.

"But we're taking a look to see what it means," Sanderson said. "We don't want to leave people

hanging. We simply want to let people know at this time that yes, we have the data in."

According to the Navy, "substances found in the soil do not appear to be from the previous fire-fighting activity, but reflect current use of the site or were present in the soil used to cover the site."

Sen. John H. Chafee, who earlier pounded both the Navy and EPA over Katy Field for failure to be aggressive in the interest of public safety, said yesterday that the present willingness of the agencies to work together will go a long way in restoring public confidence, "which was badly shaken last fall."

Chafee, who is the chairman of the Senate environment and public works committee, had urged another round of tests.

"The federal agencies involved have found that the new data is consistent with the results of the 1984 data," Chafee said, citing an earlier report that "there did not appear to be a health risk concern to past users of Katy Field based on the previously collected data."

"I hope that the final public health and risk assessments confirm these judgments," he said.



Brendan Busby/Daily News photo

A chain link fence with posted signs prevents public access to Katy Field on Coaster's Harbor Island. Federal officials are in the process of interpreting test results from soil samples to determine if the Superfund site posed a health risk to children.

Parents await translation of tests

Katy Field soil results made public; government agency to interpret data

By Janine Landry
Daily News staff

MIDDLETOWN — The Navy has received laboratory results on 37 soil samples collected in November at Katy Field and placed copies at Aquidneck Island libraries.

But the results may not make much sense to anxious parents of children who played on the grass-covered field, a federal Superfund site, a Navy spokesman said.

The Navy has sent the results to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry to interpret and assess any public health risk to those exposed at Katy Field. The agency will then prepare a report that is expected in late Jan-

uary when the Navy plans to hold a public meeting with parents.

"We told everybody we'd make the information available when it was received, but unfortunately it won't make much sense unless you're an environmental engineer," said David Sanders, the Naval Station's public affairs officer.

Copies of the report are at the Newport, Middletown and Portsmouth public libraries.

On Nov. 23, Navy and federal Environmental Protection Agency officials told parents who packed the Middletown Town Hall council chamber for a public hearing that the test results are needed to determine

KATY, Page A10



Jacqueline Marque/Daily News photo

Lynn Sokol of Middletown, pictured at a recent Middletown Little League board meeting, said her daughter started having migraine headaches last summer around the time she began playing at Katy Field. She said she feels caught in the middle of a dispute between the Navy and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Katy

Continued from Page A1

if the children who played on Katy Field were harmed.

In late October, the Navy built a fence around Katy Field after the Associated Press reported that the EPA had warned the Navy for months that the field contained toxic chemicals.

The 5.5-acre waterfront park located at the northern end of Coaster's Harbor Island was used by the Navy for fire fighting training activities from World War II to its closure in 1972.

The Navy dedicated Katy Field as a recreational area on July 4, 1976, naming it after a Revolutionary War-era sloop. A day care center operated at the site until 1994 but was closed when a new center opened elsewhere on the base, Sanders said.

For years, Navy families used Katy Field as a picnic area. Last June, the Navy moved its Military Youth Activities School to the building once used for the day care center. The program for children ages 5 to 12, used the playground during school vacations. This past summer, the Navy allowed the Middletown Little League to use the field.

Sanders said the test data shows that substances found in the surface soil aren't from the previous fire-fighting activity but were present in the soil used to cover the site. Arsenic was detected at levels that have been typically found in surface soils throughout Aquidneck Island, Sanders said.

Also detected was benzo(a)pyrene, a combustion byproduct from burning gas, wood, oil or charcoal, a substance found everywhere in an urban environ-

ment, he said. The highest level was found by the barbecue pits at the field, Sanders said.

The dispute between the Navy and the EPA centers on whether the amount of contaminants is great enough to pose a risk to the Navy families and civilian children who have used the field for years.

Mary C. Sanderson, chief of the EPA's federal facilities Superfund section, said the test data is similar to previous findings. At issue is the frequency of use of the field, she said. Past studies used numerical data calculated for estimated exposure to the field. More frequent use of the field could change the results, she said.

Lynn Sokol of Middletown said her 9-year-old daughter started having migraine headaches last summer around the time she began practicing and playing on Katy Field with the Middletown Little League. The headaches stopped about a month ago, but Sokol wonders if they had anything to do with her daughter's exposure to Katy Field. A blood test before her daughter started school showed no signs of lead poisoning, she said.

Sokol said her other daughter and her son also played on the field and haven't had any problems.

"We're in the middle. I think we have reason to be concerned," she said.

Parents should be concerned, said Robert R. Vanderslice, chief of the Rhode Island Department of Health's Office of Environmental Health, who said that parents should see that their children receive routine blood lead screenings.

"What they're concerned with is that their kids have been playing on

top of a hazardous waste facility, which is really awful.

That makes you mad," he said.

But Vanderslice added that past tests show that there is a very low level of lead and metals contamination at the field, no more so than what would show up at other ballparks. Tests of surface soil showed it was safe, he added.

In 1990, scientists took approximately 30 soil samples at various locations on Katy Field that were analyzed in an August 1993 report by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. A reference copy of the report is available at the Middletown Public Library.

The report detected antimony, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese and vanadium at Katy Field but said there was no public health concern for people infrequently exposed to the site. Daily exposures, especially among children who are prone to putting dirt in their mouths, may be of public health concern. The data used to determine the concentrations of contaminants to which such children may be exposed is inconclusive, the report said.

"Lead is everywhere in our environment. I would be very surprised that kids picked it up at Katy Field," Vanderslice said.

Vanderslice said he thinks the most recent soil tests will produce the same results. The bigger question, he said, is should these kinds of sites be used for ball fields?

"Well look at the public reaction," he said. "I don't think the Navy wanted this. What they want to do is something that addresses parents' concerns because I think they're committed to that."

The Navy has invited parents to call a medical information line at its Naval Ambulatory Care Center. The number is 841-3839. Sanders said 32 people have called the number, and only one child received a blood test for lead at the center. The test was normal, he said.

The Navy is putting together a long-term plan for Katy Field to determine if any cleanup is required, Sanders said. The plan should be completed by March.

Parents awaiting analysis of tests on contaminated playground at Navy base

NEWPORT, R.I. (AP) — Federal officials are analyzing soil tests from a contaminated playground at the Newport Navy base to determine whether children allowed on Katy Field were exposed to harmful levels of toxins.

A report from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry is expected in late January. The report should answer the questions of nervous parents whose children played on the field, built on a federal Superfund site.

The Navy built a fence around Katy Field in October after The Associated Press reported that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency had warned the Navy for months that children should not be allowed to play there.

For years, Navy families used Katy Field as a picnic area. Last June, the Navy moved its Military Youth Activities School there.

The program, for children ages 5 to 12, used the playground during school vacations. This past summer, the Navy allowed the Middletown Little League to use the field.

The dispute between the Navy and the EPA centers on whether the amount of contaminants is great enough to pose a risk to the Navy families and civilian children who have used the field for years.

Lynn Sokol of Middletown said her 9-year-old daughter started having migraine headaches last summer around the time she began practicing and playing on Katy Field with the Middletown Little League. The headaches stopped about a month ago, but Sokol wonders if they had anything

to do with her daughter's exposure to Katy Field. A blood test before her daughter started school showed no signs of lead poisoning, she said.

"We're in the middle. I think we have reason to be concerned," she told *The Newport Daily News*.

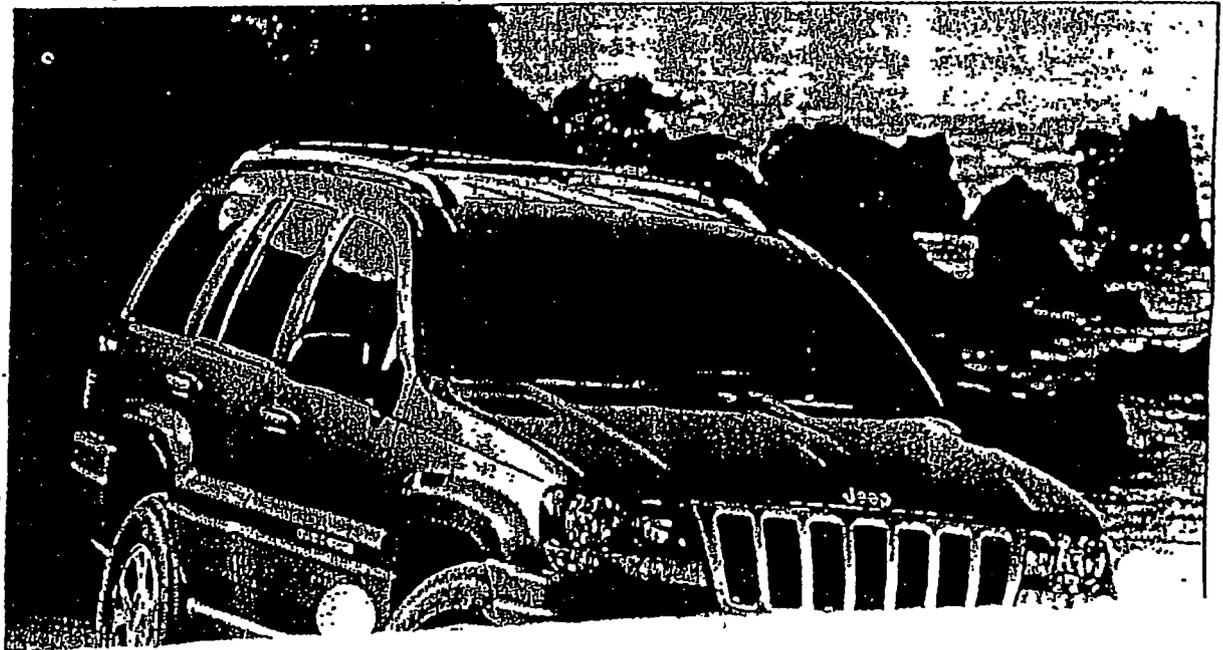
Parents should be concerned, said Robert Vanderslice, chief of the state Department of Health's Office of Environmental Health, who said that parents should see that their children receive routine blood lead screenings.

"What they're concerned with is that their kids have been playing on top of a hazardous waste facility, which is really awful. That makes you mad," he said.

But Vanderslice added that past tests show that there is a very low level of lead and metals contamination at the field, no more so than what would show up at other ballparks. Tests of surface soil showed it was safe, he added.

A previous study of the site detected arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese and vanadium at Katy Field but said there was no public health concern for people infrequently exposed to the site.

Daily exposures, especially among children who are prone to putting dirt in their mouths, may be of public health concern.



B32

**Attention Impact Card Users
Tidewater Box and Packaging**

(757) 596-8359

Lowest Prices in Tidewater, Free & Fast Delivery

Corrugated Boxes Paper Boxes

EAST BAY

Public to hear results of Katy Field tests

■ The analysis of soil samples taken at the playground will be presented at a meeting with state, federal and naval officials Monday night at Town Hall.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — An analysis of laboratory tests made on soil samples taken in November at Katy Field, on the grounds of Naval Station Newport, will be presented to the public at a meeting with state, federal and naval officials Monday at 6 p.m. at the Town Hall.

The test results will be interpreted by representatives of the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Management.

U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy also will attend the meeting, a followup to a public session called by Kennedy in November, as con-

MIDDLETOWN

cern grew about the status of pollution at the field, the former site of the Navy's Fire Fighting Training Area, and its possible effect on youngsters over the years.

Laboratory tests on the 37 soil samples were completed last month. The analysis is intended to determine the soil's potential risk to human health and its impact on the future use of the site, officials have said.

Katy Field is a 5½-acre park on the northeast portion of Coaster's Harbor Island. The playground, a ballfield and a cookout area rest on a federal Superfund site, the burial ground of the training area, which was closed in 1972.

After the buildings were destroyed, the area was covered over with soil. The site was converted to recreational use in 1976 and continued operating for Navy families until it closed

in October after strong warnings from the EPA. Public concern increased when it was disclosed that youngsters with the Middletown Little League played games at the ballfield during the summer.

"The parents of the Middletown Little Leaguers who used the field and the families whose children have attended the day-care center or used the playground and picnic areas need to have the latest information and the opportunity to ask important questions," Kennedy said yesterday.

"The first public meeting was informative, but the data being used to discuss the various contaminants was inconclusive," he said.

"Now that the additional soil samples have been analyzed from the high-use areas at Katy Field, area residents and Navy families will be able to receive a more complete public health assessment."

The Middletown Town Hall is located at 350 East Main Rd.

B33

PHOTO BY JERRY O'BRIEN

No health risk at Katy Field, federal officials say

But many parents remain skeptical about the conclusions from federal and state officials.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN — In clear terms and with a forthright manner, officials from the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry looked concerned parents straight in the eye last night and told them that their children were not at risk from exposure to chemicals by playing at Katy Field.

Katy

Continued from Page C 1

within two weeks after she stopped playing there.

The parents' concern prompted U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, who hosted the meeting, to ask EPA Superfund branch chief Don Berger "why the EPA jumped down the Navy's throat" in the first place.

"We don't use dead bodies" as a criteria for action, Berger replied. "We use theoretical risk and we raised a caution flag."

Hossom said that the tests of 37 new soil samples taken at locations all over Katy Field in November reinforced what was known from four previous studies: that Katy Field is safe for recreational use. Berger agreed.

To put in perspective for parents the low levels of metals, hydrocarbons and other toxic substances found at the field, Hossom said that children would be safe even if they continually ate handfuls of dirt from the field for a year.

"There is overwhelming evidence that these levels are safe," Carole Hossom, an environmental health specialist with the agency, said of its latest analysis.

"All the evidence said that no one is likely to have health effects."

That statement — with the same confidence behind it — was repeated by officials from the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the state Department of Environmental Management, Naval Station Newport and naval contractors.

All officials also agreed that Katy Field, a 5 1/2-acre park at the northeast portion of Coast-

er's Harbor Island in Newport, should remain fenced in and closed to the public until the results of further studies can guide its future use.

Meeting with nearly 100 people in a packed council chamber in Town Hall, the conclusions of the experts were met with considerable skepticism from some parents.

Those parents noted that the EPA strongly criticized the Navy just a few months ago for its failure to act quickly to EPA concerns about the repeated exposure of children at the field.

Katy Field is the burial ground of the Navy's former Fire Fighting Training Area and is a federal Superfund site.

The Navy closed Katy Field and a youth center on the grounds in October as political pressure and public concern increased over the Navy's continued use of a playground, park and ballfield at the site.

"I'm not comfortable about this," said Sara Gallagher, of Tiverton, who said she lost her job at the Navy-run youth center when it was closed down.

Gallagher also said that her 8-year-old daughter, Brittany, who played daily at the site during the summer, suffered from repeated migraine headaches and nausea, conditions that ceased

Turn to KATY, Page C 2.

"There is overwhelming evidence that these levels are safe. All the evidence said that no one is likely to have health effects."

— Carole Hossom, health specialist

Playground is safe, officials tell parents

■ Public meeting in Middletown airs the results of independent tests run on Katy Field soil samples.

By Phil Sweeney
Daily News staff

MIDDLETOWN — Citing overwhelming evidence, federal health officials told concerned parents Monday that environmental conditions at the Navy's Katy Field pose no risk to the children who played there.

"Playing at Katy Field was safe for your families," said Carole Hossom, an environmental health scientist. She spoke to a roomful of parents at Town Hall.

Hossom, who works for the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, said recent tests of the topsoil at Katy Field were examined, and subsequent health assessments showed no reason to think anyone would be harmed by chemicals at the field.

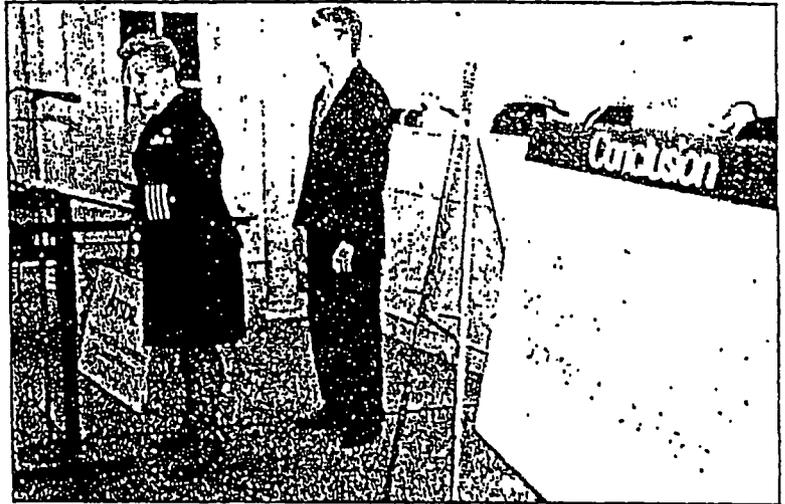
"No one ... is likely to get sick from their past experience at Katy Field," Hossom said.

Parents of children who used Katy Field for a summer day camp and to play Little League baseball grew concerned about potential health problems last fall. Press reports at the time revealed a lingering dispute between the Navy and the federal Environmental Protection Agency about whether increased use of the field was safe.

The Navy maintained that substances in the soil at Katy Field — which was once a training area for Navy firefighters — would not harm children who played there. When public anxiety rose, the Navy decid-



Hossom



Jacqueline Marquer/Daily News photo

Navy Capt. Cheryl Oakleaf addresses the crowd during the meeting Monday at Middletown Town Hall on test results from Katy Field. U.S. Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, D-R.I., at right, was the moderator for the meeting.

ed to close the area and put up a fence.

The Navy ordered further soil tests, and an independent study of those samples was used in the work done by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, which is a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For the sake of thoroughness, Hossom said her agency calculated the health risk by using the improbable assumption that everyone who visited Katy Field ate dirt every day for a year. Even under that extreme scenario, no one was likely to become ill from contaminants in the soil, she said.

To stress the point, Hossom used a red marker to cross out the word "risk" on a board showing the process her team used to reach its conclusion. That process included the use of a variety of research and epidemiological studies, blood and urine tests, exposure investigations and interviews.

Because the new tests reinforced previous studies, Hossom told the group she was very confi-

dent in the accuracy of the findings.

EPA officials, who last year questioned the Navy's decision to allow youngsters to play at Katy Field more frequently, agreed that the new test results provide definitive answers.

When questioned by parents about that position, Don Berger of the EPA's Boston office said the new facts allowed his agency to back off from its earlier worries. "We have a lot more information than we did before," he said.

Berger said EPA's concerns last year were meant to be taken as a precaution.

"Given the lack of data ... we think we did the right thing raising the red flag," Berger said.

Bettina Boughton, who lives in Middletown and whose son played baseball at Katy Field, asked why an unusually high level of lead found in a previous study was not identified in the most recent tests.

Navy officials said because no similar readings were found elsewhere on the field, and no high

KATY FIELD, Page B2

Katy Field

Continued from Page B1

levels of lead were located in the soil samples taken in November; that one previous sample was assumed to be the result of a paint chip or piece of metal.

Another parent, Sara Gallagher of Tiverton, said she had heard rumors that the Navy was worried about environmental risks at Katy Field as long as 15 years ago. She asked if the Navy closed a day care center there because of such worries.

Capt. Cheryl Oakleaf, commander of the Naval Station, said that was not true. The previous day care center was closed when federal funds became available to build a new and better facility.

Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, D-R.I., who last year had pressed for further study at Katy Field, said he was satisfied with the effort and pleased with the results.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has the experts to properly review the data, and Kennedy said he believes its work was done with the right amount of independence.

"They're not out there to cover someone's behind," Kennedy told the group.

Heather Gough, a Middletown resident whose son attended the Navy camp last summer every day for 10 weeks, said her son has been examined by a doctor and shows no sign of health problems.

Gough said she is relieved at the latest news, but she believes the Navy handled the matter poorly. "This was all boiling under the surface, and they were letting our kids sign up for camp," she said.



Jacqueline Marque/Daily News photo

Sara Gallagher, whose daughter played at Katy Field, questions the results of tests performed on soil samples from the playground. She attended the meeting at Middletown Town Hall Monday.

Topsoil tests quelled fears over Navy site

The worst fears of many parents were laid to rest Monday evening as federal officials offered clear and convincing information that no child will get sick from having played at the Navy's Katy Field.

The language of government reports often is complex and hard to understand, but there was no trouble understanding this report or the officials who presented it.

"Playing at Katy Field was safe for your families," said Carole Hossom, an environmental health scientist with the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Her words, backed by scientific tests conducted by unbiased experts, should provide long-needed comfort to parents who worried that their children would suffer from having played at Katy Field, which was once the site of a Navy fire-fighting school. Parents were concerned that contaminated soil under the grassy playground field might have endangered their children.

Hossom and other federal officials took the case seriously and examined every possible health hazard.

Hossom said that for the sake of thoroughness, her agency calculat-

Our view

ed the health risk by using the improbable assumption that everyone who visited Katy Field ate dirt every day for a year. Even under that circumstance, no one was likely to become ill from contaminants in the soil, she said.

Much of the credit for bringing this difficult case to a satisfactory close belongs to Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I., who responded to the concerns of parents by bringing everyone together and stressing the need for immediate evaluation of the problem. Navy officials, who were criticized for placing a playground at the site and not closing it when the environmental concerns were first revealed, were supportive of the federal testing. The Environmental Protection Agency took the case seriously and moved quickly to get answers.

As Kennedy said Monday, the result was satisfactory. There was no coverup, only good, strong scientific research.

That's what is supposed to happen. In this case, it did.

INSIDE: Portsmouth School Committee meets C-2 E Letters to the editor from local readers C-4

EAST BAY

SECTION
C
11

THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1999

SEWING, BARRINGTON, BRISTOL, LITTLE COMPTON, MIDDLETOWN, NEWPORT, PORTSMOUTH, RIVERTON & WARREN

Two more studies to be released on Katy Field

One report due next month is an ecological risk assessment.

By JERRY O'BRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

NEWPORT — A pair of studies on the contamination at Katy Field expected to be released next month could cast additional light on the Superfund site and its effects on the environment.

The draft report of a study on whether chemicals have leached from the site into Narragansett Bay will be released Feb. 23, at the next monthly meeting of the restoration advi-

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

sory board, according to Capt. A. Cheryl Oakleaf, commander of Naval Station Newport.

Called an ecological risk assessment, the study is being prepared by the Navy and will be released to the public at the board meeting, Oakleaf said Monday night.

The board includes community members and representatives of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Environmental Management, who are monitoring the Navy's cleanup at a

dozen polluted sites on the west side of Aquidneck Island.

The meeting is scheduled for 7 p.m. at the officer's club on the Navy base.

The risk assessment then will be reviewed by EPA and DEM officials, who could agree with the findings or take issue with the testing methods and conclusions.

Oakleaf referred to the forthcoming study at a public meeting at the Middletown Town Hall, where the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry announced its judgment that the children and adults who played at Katy Field over the years are

not at risk.

Despite the agency's confidence, based in part on a new round of soil samples taken at the playground, park and ballfield, a few parents remained unconvinced.

Those parents believe that past disputes between the Navy and the EPA over the level of contamination, the testing methods used and the safety of children exposed to the soil undermine any new conclusions.

EPA officials said at the meeting that their earlier concerns were prompted by prudence.

Katy Field is the burial ground of the Navy's former Fire Fighting Training Area.

The field and a youth center on the grounds were closed by the Navy in October as the EPA continued its criticism of the Navy's slow response to EPA safety fears.

ATSDR officials Monday night, at a meeting hosted by U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, declared the area fully safe for recreational use. EPA officials agreed, pulling back from their earlier worries after seeing the new test results.

The ATSDR conclusion was a preview of a larger draft study, called a health consultation, which also is due to be released next

Turn to KATY, Page C 3

Katy

Continued from Page C 1
month for review by the Navy, EPA and DEM.

In addition, the Navy is working on a Remedial Investigation Study, which will guide the future use of the site. That study will include an analysis of soil core samples taken from deep within the ground.

Some of those samples were taken in 1994. The Navy is planning to take additional core samples this summer, officials have said.

"Katy Field is safe for recreational use, but we still have work before

us," Oakleaf said at the meeting. "Subsurface soil must be tested to determine future use."

All parties agreed that Katy Field should remain closed "until the final determination is made," as Oakleaf put it.

Kennedy spokesman Larry Berman said last night that Kennedy "was very delighted that the news was so good from the federal officials, but concerned that the people attending somehow seemed skeptical of that good news. ... He's hoping that the ATSDR can get a complete copy of the report to these people.

"Then, if they still have more concerns, it's certainly appropriate to convene one more meeting to assuage any of the fears."

Contaminants at Katy Field pose no health risk, report says

■ The full draft of the federal report provides more detail on the results of tests made on soil samples taken at the site.

By JERRY O'DRIEN
Journal Staff Writer

NEWPORT — A draft report by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry on the health impact of exposure to contaminants at Katy Field has found that children and adults who played there "are not likely to experience health problems from contact with the soil in those areas."

AQUIDNECK ISLAND

That conclusion was first announced in January at a public meeting in Middletown. The full draft of the ATSDR report provides more detail on the results of tests made on 37 surface soil samples taken in November from the site.

Katy Field, a 5½-acre park at the northeast portion of Coaster's Harbor Island, included a playground, baseball field and picnic area. The location is the former home of the Navy's Fire Fighting Training Area and is a federal Superfund site.

The Navy closed Katy Field and a youth center on the grounds and fenced in the area in October as political pressure and public concern increased over the Navy's continued use of the land, which included summer visits by the Middletown Little League.

That concern sprang from earlier criticism by the federal Environmental Protection Agency that the Navy

Katy

Continued from Page C 1

was failing to respond to EPA complaints about the repeated exposure of children at the field.

Noting the last round of tests, EPA officials flatly stated at the January meeting that the area was safe for recreational use.

In addition to concluding that people who played in the past at Katy Field and the youth center are not likely to experience health problems, the ATSDR report states that the November samples confirmed that levels of contaminants in the surface soils do not present a current health hazard to children or adults.

"Contaminants are not present at levels of health concern," it states.

Because subsurface and groundwater contamination does exist, ATSDR notes future land use that includes substantial digging could result in exposure to that contamination.

The report recommends that any lease or transfer of the land prohibit

development to a residential or similar use unless contaminant levels of subsurface soil and groundwater "decrease to below levels of health concern."

According to David Sanders, spokesman for Naval Station Newport, a Navy study released last week examined 23 core samples from offshore sites adjacent to Katy Field.

The study found one sample with elevated levels of a type of aromatic hydrocarbon along with metals such as cadmium, chromium and copper.

"The next step is to recommend some sort of means to clean both the onshore and offshore area," Sanders said yesterday. "Whatever procedure we use will be used at one time in a comprehensive project."

The Navy's contractor for its Superfund properties, Tetra Tech Inc., of Wilmington, Mass., will recommend a cleanup method, which would be passed along to the EPA and the state Department of Environmental Management for review.

A public meeting would then be scheduled to announce the plan, Sanders said.

EAST BAY

Past exposure to soil at Middletown field no health threat

VAUGHN WATSON
Journal Staff Writer

MIDDLETOWN—The agency that conducted a public-health assessment of Katy Field for Navy and local officials restated its conclusions yesterday in Middletown.

Past exposure to contaminants in the surface soil at Katy Field does not present a health hazard to anyone, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry said.

The agency, joined by an official with the state Department of Environmental Management, held two public forums in a conference room at Town Hall.

The agency was created as an arm of the federal Department of Health and Human Services by 1980 Superfund legislation.

Katy Field, a 5 1/2-acre park at the northeast quadrant of Coaster's Harbor Island in Newport, is a federal Superfund site. The field is the old firefighting training area.

The Navy closed Katy Field last October in response to public outrage over its continued use as a playground and ballpark.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency strongly criticized the Navy, saying that the Navy failed to act quickly to EPA concerns about the repeated exposure of children playing at the field.

In a meeting at Town Hall in January, administrators from the EPA, the state Department of Environmental Management and Naval Station Newport stressed to parents that no one is likely to have health effects from playing at Katy Field.

The toxic-substances agency repeated that assertion in a question-and-answer pamphlet made available at yesterday's forums.

However, the fence around Katy Field remains closed, "because contaminant levels at five to six feet below the ground surface could pose a hazard to construction workers," the agency said.

But it emphasized that past exposures to contaminants in the surface soil at Katy field "do not present a health hazard to anyone, including infants, toddlers, young children, teenagers, parents, pregnant women, daycare-center workers, day-camp workers or lawn-care workers who might have ingested soil or sediments daily."

Also, it is not necessary for parents to get their child's blood or urine tested for contaminants

if the child played at Katy Field.

"The levels of contaminants in the surface soils are so low... that exposure to them would not be measurable above normal levels in the blood or urine," the agency said in the pamphlet.

"Because chemical levels are so low at Katy Field," the agency said, "even wet soil poses no cause for concern."

No members of the public attended the afternoon session, held from 2:30 to 5 p.m. The groups held a second forum from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry is urging parents who have questions to call the agency at (888) 422-8737. The 36-page health report with the agency's findings is available at the public libraries in Newport, Portsmouth and Middletown.

Appendix C

Navy Risk Communication Resources

Navy Risk Communication Resources

One primary conclusion from the Katy Field Case Study is that more Navy personnel need training in Risk Communication. The Naval School, Civil Engineering Corps Officers (CECOS) offers a three-day course to all Department of Defense Employees entitled, Health and Environmental Risk Communication Workshop. This course is designed to teach attendees how to have open discussion on environmental restoration issues, establish confidence in communicating key messages, develop effective media and public meeting techniques, improve verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and revitalize stakeholder dialogue. For more information about this course, including dates and locations for upcoming workshops, see the CECOS website located at www.cecoc.navy.mil.

When site specific assistance is needed, the Navy Environmental Health Center, Environmental Programs Directorate is available to provide health and environmental risk communication support to Navy activities. We offer advice and assistance in preparing correspondence, practice evaluation of your messenger, preparation for a RAB meeting or other public meeting, assistance with community relations plans and profiling your community, and anticipating tough questions and developing answers. We have poster displays available on several of the most common chemicals or hazards present at Installation Restoration (IR) sites as well as general displays explaining such topics as the IR process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

Given sufficient notice, we can develop site-specific poster displays for your activity's needs or produce special risk communication workshops (either internally or through paid consultants). At least one purpose of the site-specific workshops would be to bring all stakeholders together and work out specific communication issues. Depending on the complexity/degree of concern, more than one workshop may be necessary. All consultation services and poster displays in support of the Navy IR Program and BRAC program produced internally at NEHC are free of charge.

Please contact us at (757) 462-5548 with any questions or requests for assistance. In addition, you may visit our web site at www.nehc.med.navy.mil for additional information on the Navy Environmental Health Center and the services we provide.