

November 30, 1992

The Honorable Warren E. Tolman  
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
House of Representatives  
State House  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

Dear Mr. Tolman:

This letter is in response to your letter dated October 16, 1992. Your letter describes the concerns of residents of Watertown, Massachusetts that radioactive waste generated at the Army Materials Technology Laboratory (MTL) (formerly Watertown Arsenal) may have been placed in the former Watertown landfill which is now known as Filipello Park.

We have carefully reviewed the information included in your letter and the letter sent to us by Helen Waldorf, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Robert M. Hallisey, Massachusetts Department of Public Health (copy enclosed). The information provided is not sufficient to provide a reasonable basis for concluding that radioactive waste was disposed of in the former Watertown Landfill. Further, because of the large volume of the former landfill property, and the technical difficulties associated with detecting depleted uranium (the radioactive material most used at the Former Watertown Arsenal) in the landfill material, it would be extremely difficult and expensive to conclusively determine whether radioactive waste had been placed in the landfill. Finally, there is little likelihood that depleted uranium, if indeed placed in the former landfill, would result in a health hazard to nearby residents or those using Filipello Park.

Notwithstanding the above, the following actions have been taken to evaluate the possible improper disposal of radioactive waste at the former Watertown landfill by the former Watertown Arsenal.

1. MTL has completed a document search for information relating to possible improper disposal of radioactive waste by MTL and found no evidence that radioactive waste was sent to the landfill.
2. The Army Corps of Engineers, New England Division (NED) has committed in their 'Scope of Work to Conduct a Preliminary Assessment for the Former Watertown Arsenal, Watertown, Massachusetts' to complete a document search of Watertown Arsenal records to determine if there are any indications that radioactive material was disposed in the former Watertown Landfill or at the incinerator. The Preliminary Assessment is scheduled to be completed and provided to NRC in March 1993 for our review and evaluation.

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The Honorable Warren E. Tolman

3. The Region I staff has completed a review of historical and decommissioning documents in our possession associated with the former Watertown Arsenal and MTL for any information pertaining to waste disposal and the former Watertown landfill area. No evidence of disposal of radioactive waste in the Watertown landfill was found.
4. Based on our document reviews, Region I has requested that MTL explain the activities which were conducted on the property between Arlington Street and Coolidge Avenue and South of Sawins Pond that the former Watertown Arsenal rented until June 30, 1960. Since this property is near to Filipello Park, this information may help us understand whether radioactive waste was disposed in the Park.
5. The NRC Region I staff will review with the Army staff the potential for inadvertent or intentional disposal of radioactive waste to the former Watertown landfill as the MTL proceeds through the decommissioning process and as we inspect and review that process, including the review of submissions made by the Army as described in items 2 and 4 above.

If we develop any information which leads us to conclude that there is a reasonable likelihood that radioactive waste was improperly disposed, we will, of course, pursue that information to resolve the matter.

If you can provide more definite information concerning possible improper disposal of radioactive material, such as eyewitness accounts, we will reconsider our decision in light of that information. We appreciate you bringing these concerns to our attention.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By:  
Thomas T. Martin

Thomas T. Martin  
Regional Administrator

Enclosure:

Ltr, dtd 8/17/92, from Mass. DEP  
and Mass. DPH to NRC, Region I

The Honorable Warren E. Tolman

bcc:

Docket File (40-02253)

T. T. Martin, RI

W. F. Kane, RI

R. W. Cooper, RI

S. F. Shankman, RI

R. R. Bellamy, RI

I. D. Kinneman, RI

A. R. Bouwens, RI

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~~Shankman~~  
~~11/10/92~~

~~DRSS~~  
~~Cooper~~  
~~11/14/92~~

*W.F.*  
*11/23/92*

The Honorable Warren E. Tolman

cc w/encl:

Department of the Army

Materials Technology Laboratory

SLCMT-DDM (5-10c)

ATTN: James T. Naughton  
Major, OD  
Commander

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Department of the Army

Materials Technology Laboratory

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ATTN: Peter Cornetta  
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U.S. Army Materiel Command

ATTN: AMCSF-P (Mr. John Manfre)

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Department of the Army

Corps of Engineers, New England Division

ATTN: Richard D. Reardon,  
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U.S. Army Toxic and Hazardous Materials Agency

ATTN: CETHA-BC (Mr. Salvatore Torrisi)

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The Honorable Warren E. Tolman

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ATTN: Robert Hallisey

Director

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ATTN: Ms. Anne Malewicz

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ATTN: Reference Department

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Public Document Room