



For Immediate Release:

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Despite Heavy Opposition from the Community and Protect PT, DEP Approves Landfill Leachate Air Permit, Profits Prioritized Over Public Health

Due to Westmoreland Sanitary Landfill's (WSL) history of repeated violations, poor management and general obsolescence, Protect PT agrees with community members who believe that WSL continues to pose a serious threat to their health. The evaporator will release contaminants, including PFAS, into the air and, inevitably, into local and state waterways.

Protect PT's Executive Director, Gillian Graber, stated: "The DEP should be focusing on protecting the health of the public, not the economic viability of private business."

"The approval of this permit is incredibly disappointing and not in the best interest of the communities most impacted," said Makenzie White, MPH LSW, Protect PT's Environmental Consultant. "The approval will lead to the byproducts of the leachate such as radium-226, radium-228, radon and PFAS being released into the air. A report done by the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) confirmed that this type of equipment can lead to aerosols containing TENORM being released. These pollutants will then travel downwind impacting a multitude of communities."

WSL has serial offenses when it comes to following health and safety regulations. The DEP and WSL claim that the evaporator is intended to burn the leachate so that TENORMs (Technologically Enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials) are burned off, not dispersed. However, this is not promised. This is unproven technology, and the reality does not indicate that the evaporator will be able to convert all the leachate.

"We are lab rats. You can't live here," said Rostraver Township community member Jack Krue. "Would you buy a home in the path of these emissions? Our property values are dropping, fast. The only people benefitting are the owners of the landfill."

Krue has been advocating against the evaporator: "The DEP stated that this evaporator is safe, but now they are setting up 6 RAD (radiation) detectors around the evaporation heads in order to pick up radionuclides. Their statements and actions contradict themselves. By living here and tracing the particulate matter, I am right in the path of this."

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approved the landfill in Rostraver Township to install a leachate evaporator intended to assist with the landfill's leachate disposal. Leachate is the contaminated liquid that is generated from water that percolates through a solid waste disposal site (in this case, WSL), accumulates contaminants and moves into subsurface areas. The DEP claims that evaporating leachate is a better alternative to trucking leachate to another site for disposal. However, simpler technology was previously implemented at WSL and poorly managed, leading to negative health effects for community members, additional consent orders and a general lack of community trust. The evaporator alternative is a significantly more complex technology, evoking concerns from residents and environmental groups as this historically mismanaged landfill has failed to prove their ability to properly handle their technology.

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About Protect PT: *Protect Penn-Trafford is a citizen's group working to ensure the safety, security, and quality of life from the effects of unconventional gas development in Penn-Trafford and surrounding communities in Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties. Learn more at protectpt.org.*