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Environmental News

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Lee Romano Ball Field Sampling Results Show Field is Safe for Use

BOSTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced at a meeting last night with Little League parents that the Lee Romano Ball Field in North Providence is safe for use and presents no public health risk.

EPA made its determination based on recent dioxin sampling results from two rounds of soil samples collected in January from a half-dozen locations on the baseball field and near the concession stand. The sampling was coordinated with the R.I. Department of Public Health and the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in Atlanta.

"As we hoped, the Lee Romano baseball field is entirely safe," said John P. DeVillars, EPA's New England Administrator. "Parents should feel comfortable that there is no health risk whatsoever allowing their children to play baseball at the field."

EPA, ATSDR and the R.I. Department of Public Health staff attended the monthly Little League meeting last night to answer parents' questions and to confirm that there is no health risk to children from playing on the field.

"The sampling results at the Lee Romano Field support our belief that the major area of concern for dioxin contamination is further north in the river, primarily between Centredale Manor and Allendale Dam," DeVillars said. "We will continue to target our investigation in that area."

EPA initiated dioxin testing in the Woonasquatucket in 1996, when it collected eel and various other fish tissue samples from the river. The sampling was launched after EPA learned that people were consuming fish caught in the river.

EPA has since conducted an aggressive sampling and public information campaign focusing on the dioxin issue. Precautionary measures have been taken at several locations along the river, including the installation of snow fences and warning signs to limit public access to areas where elevated dioxin levels have been found.

DeVillars reminded the public to heed public warnings that have been issued about the contamination problem. "Adults and children should not eat any fish caught from the river, and should avoid areas of the Woonasquatucket River where we have identified elevated levels of dioxin in river soils and sediments," DeVillars said.

For health related questions and information, please contact the Family Health Information Line at the R.I. Department of Health. The Information Line, which is taking calls for EPA's Woonasquatucket River Hotline, is 1-800-942-7434. The Family Information Line operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. On evenings and weekends, callers may leave a name and telephone number. Hotline staff will return the call on the next business day.

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