

**October 27, 2009**

**STATEMENT FROM WANDA WASHINGTON – TALLEVAST, FLORIDA RESIDENT**

In 1961, The American Beryllium Company opened in Tallevast as a precision machinery and metal works plant and operated for some 35 years. The plant, under the new ownership of Lockheed Martin Corporation, was closed in 1996.

Tallevast is a close-knit community facing a threat unlike any before from chemicals in our soil and water. For years we were unknowingly poisoned by ingesting and inhaling toxic chemicals. This is the water parents used to make baby formula, cook family meals, bathe in and launder clothes. We have begun to wonder whether our historical community will continue to survive.

At some undetermined time, a spill of volatile organic compounds (VOC) was found to have seeped into the groundwater of the surrounding area. The contamination was discovered when Lockheed completed a due diligence assessment in preparation for the sale of the plant. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) only cited 6 chemicals in their consent order: *Tetrachloroethane* (PCE), *Tichloroethylene* (TCE), *1,1-Dichloroethene* (1,1-DCE), *1,1-Dichloroethane* (DCA) and *cis 1,2-Dicholoroethene* (cis 1,2-DCE). Other VOC's and metals in both soil and water were noted in earlier reports (*Chromium, Vinyl Chloride, Dioxane, Arsenic, Lead, Beryllium* and other petroleum derivatives/chemical agents); however FDEP failed to address these. Yet, in 2009, when Lockheed submitted their newest iteration of their Remedial Action Plan to the FDEP, they included four new COCs. The inclusion of these four new COCs violated the Tallevast Bill (discussed later) since Lockheed did not notify the community; they simply included them in the plan. The community continues to fear that time will prove the existence of other pollutants in their groundwater.

A document dated January 2000 revealed the pollution had migrated off site, but the neighboring community was not made aware of the potential impact on their lives and property until late 2003. That is when inquiring residents observed Lockheed contractors placing monitoring wells in the community. At that time the residents were unofficially informed of the chemical spill at the plant and were told that both FDEP and Manatee County Government were aware of the problem and were supportive of all activity taking place. An official notice was not received by the residents until April of 2005 via certified letter from the FDEP. This official notification was due to new legislation, a bill inspired by the Tallevast pollution. The bill provides for increased contamination notification requirements for FDEP. Called Promote Personal Responsibility and Safeguard Individual Liberty, the bill requires a property owner or its representative of the source property from which contamination originates to give written certified notice to FDEP when they discover that a contaminant could reasonably have migrated into any property beyond the boundaries of the source property no later than 10 days from the discovery of contamination. The surrounding property owners and businesses benefit directly from this notification in having more timely and comprehensive information on the progress of the cleanup of nearby properties in order to make informed decisions regarding the potential risk of exposure and appropriate ways to reduce or eliminate risk.

In late 2003 Lockheed and its contractor reported to the community that the cancer-causing solvents had remained mostly on their site. The area of fouled groundwater slid just beyond the plant's boundaries, but didn't affect any private wells in the area. Early 2004, the community insisted upon an independent assessment of the problem. Sampling was done of private wells and revealed extremely high levels of VOCs in the water. The groundwater contamination had spread across 50 acres in the community which lead to temporary waterline hookups and discontinued usage of potable wells. FDEP recommended that Lockheed reassess the site in 2005, which proved the plume now covered more than 131 acres and a new VOC, 1, 4 Dioxane, was identified. In 2006, the plume was assessed again and the contamination was found to affect an area of over 200 acres.

On August 3, 2008, after being told repeatedly by Lockheed Martin officials that the interim remedial system was secured by "double redundancies," the system failed and a tank released contaminated water that lapped against the adjacent community center, where the children spent much of their time. The "protective" chain link fence was no match to the flood of polluted water. While Lockheed attempted to downplay the extent of the spill, wide media coverage of the incident and outrage of the residents forced the FDEP into action. Another consent order was issued and Lockheed received a fine. The incident increased the distrust the community already felt toward Lockheed and strengthened their resolve to fight for the best possible clean-up plan. In addition, while the size of these sorts of tanks is proposed to grow in the RAP, the community center remains in the same location.

Like most of the country's 350 current or former beryllium plants, American Beryllium was largely self-regulated. The federal Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) inspected the plant five times from 1975 to 1982. Inspectors cited the plant for a total of 10 violations. After 1982, the company took its own air quality samples, but those results weren't forwarded to OSHA. OSHA claimed to not have the resources so it relied on the industry to police itself. As of 2009, the Tallevast Lockheed site is still undergoing Beryllium cleanup.

In February 2005, a report revealed that seven out of 241 (3%) people screened in a county-funded program tested positive for beryllium sensitivity. Six former employees, who paid for their own tests, also tested positive, according to a January 2009 report. That brings the total number of known positive tests to 13. The results stunned a medical doctor who specialized in the treatment of beryllium disease. He stated the results indicate Tallevast residents were exposed to beryllium dust from the former plant. These results should force federal agencies to look into community exposures and learn that "factory poisons do not stop at the factory gate."

To date, the cries and pleas of the community have gone unheard by governmental agencies designed to protect the rights of citizens. Our local governments have been unable to offer the kind of assistance needed by the residents of Tallevast. Our repeated request for a sufficient clean up is ignored. A more radical approach to the plight of Tallevast should have been taken, starting with the consent order. Since 2003, Lockheed has changed their technical support team three times and other personnel have been shuffled constantly. While each new team comes with the promise of a better communication, we are still left with unanswered questions.

Tallevast is evidence of what pollution can do to a community when industry is not properly monitored and controlled. An informal health assessment, completed by members of the community in 2004, showed that cancer deaths in the community were abnormally high. We urge local, state, and federal governments to pass stricter rules as to siting of industrial facilities, controlling and regulating pollution, and providing proper and early notification to communities threatened with extinction because of industrial pollution.