An EPA study (not yet formally released) says we should expect an increase in midnight dumping. The study says small generators of hazardous waste--principally automotive maintenance shops and dry cleaners--are being forced out of business trying to comply with "small generator" hazardous waste disposal rules. Rather than go out of business, they'll probably choose "midnight dumping," the study suggests.

The study says there are several problems with hazardous waste disposal for small firms. Chief among them is the way the waste hauling industry is organized: the industry is a monopoly in many areas; this problem is "widespread," the study says. Where monopoly prevails, disposal prices are high and escalating, and "coercion, intimidation, and threatened boycott" are present. Coercion, intimidation and threatened boycott are the tactics brought to this industry by organized crime.

The study was completed by trade associations but will be distributed by Karen Brown, EPA Small Business Ombudsman, Mail Stop A149-C, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460; phone (202) 557-1938. Ask for a copy of "Hazardous Waste Pickup Problems Among Automotive Maintenance and Dry Cleaning Firms;" dated July, 1987.

--Peter Montague

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SCIENCE AND POLITICS COMBINE TO DEFEAT A MAJOR LANDFILL SCHEME

Dumpbusters, the citizens group in Spencerville, OH (see RHWN #51), fighting a huge solid waste landfill proposed by Waste Management, Inc., has won a total victory. Waste Management withdrew its application November 16 because they had been given a choice by authorities: withdraw your application or have it formally denied.

Pump tests run on test wells during July had shown an underground hydraulic connection (water flow) between the proposed dump site and the town's municipal drinking water wells. Sally Teets, leader of the Dumpbusters, says she's convinced that the groundwater data were only "influential" with the authorities because Dumpbusters, fighting a huge solid waste landfill proposal by Waste Management, Inc., won a total victory. Waste Management withdrew its application November 16 because they had been given a choice by authorities: withdraw your application or have it formally denied.

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NEWSLETTER ON LEGAL AND MEDICAL ASPECTS OF 'ECOLOGICAL ILLNESS' PROVIDES IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You can't win without information, but you can also drown in information. What we all need is the information we can use and nothing more. We need concentrated, distilled information at an affordable price. A tall order.

We have found a newsletter packed with useful information: the ECOLOGICAL ILLNESS LAW REPORT. For five years its editor, Earon Davis (a lawyer with a master's degree in public health) has been cranking it out, working alone in his basement. The product is wonderful.

What is "ecological illness?" It's "a growing constellation of illnesses caused or exacerbated by chemical pollutants in indoor, outdoor, and workplace environments. These illnesses, probably attributable to chemically induced immune system disorders, may produce a wide range of disabling disease symptoms," Mr. Davis writes.

In other words, ecological illness is what we're all worried about--getting sick from the modern environment, whether it's from dumps or bad drinking water or toxic household products.

Part of this problem is perfectly normal reactions to powerful chemicals, like workers and their families getting lung disease from asbestos. But another, less well-known part of this problem is "environmental hypersensitivity"--people who are especially sensitive to particular chemicals. The 10% of the population with asthma falls into this category, for example. An estimated 20% of the population (roughly 44 million Americans) suffers from some kind of environmental hypersensitivity--headaches, skin rashes, coughs, breathing difficulties, ringing in the ears... and on and on. For some of these people, the modern environment is a nightmare, and for all of them it is a very mixed blessing.

The ECOLOGICAL ILLNESS LAW REPORT is mainly aimed at lawyers, but much of it is useful to you and me. It covers precedent-setting legal cases, and it covers medical news. For example, in the latest issue (September, 1987, Vol. IV, No. 6) we learn that Missouri residents and workers received a settlement of $19 million from the people responsible for spraying dioxin-contaminated oil on local roads--the incident that caused the permanent evacuation of the town of Times Beach, MO. Various illnesses and injuries had been claimed, as well as property losses.

We also learn that an employee of Browning-Ferris Industries (BFI) was awarded $275,000 after he developed central blind spots in both his eyes. He had worked for eight years with benzene, toluene, xylene, ethylene, glycol lead, tetraethyl lead and other substances. NONE OF THESE CHEMICALS EXCEEDED THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE LEVELS but, in combination, the Plaintiff argued, the chemicals caused disabling blindness.

We also learn that two recent scientific studies have found that formaldehyde exposure of dogs and humans seems to cause impaired immune system functioning. Formaldehyde is a common chemical in building materials and household products, such as new carpets, and hair shampoos, among others.

All in all, this newsletter is a treasure chest of ammunition for people arguing that we need closer control of chemicals. It's $30 per year (four issues) from EILR, P.O. Box 1796, Evanston, IL 60204; phone (312) 256-3730.

--Peter Montague

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Descriptor terms: mcs; environmental illness; citizen groups; pollution; lawyers; citizen groups; landfilling; spencerville, oh; oh; dumpbusters; groundwater; waste hauling industry; epa; hazardous waste; waste disposal technologies; small generators;