



Office of Representative Heath Shuler

Representing North Carolina's Eleventh Congressional District

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Rep. Shuler Calls for Investigation of EPA Emergency Hotlines

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Heath Shuler today called on officials at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to formally investigate the agency's emergency hotlines following events this weekend at a hazardous waste site in North Carolina's 11th District.

The EPA has been involved in emergency removal actions in the area surrounding the CTS site in Skyland, North Carolina. For nearly three decades, the CTS Corporation manufactured electronic parts at this site, a process that required use of significant amounts of chemicals, including the toxic substance trichloroethylene (TCE). Groundwater, spring water, soil and ambient air in this area have all tested positive for this hazardous chemical substance.

On the afternoon of Friday, April 24th, a well which had previously been capped due to elevated levels of TCE sprung a leak, spraying contaminated water onto a local resident's lawn. This resident and others nearby attempted to reach EPA's regional and national emergency hotlines, but callers received no response. EPA contractors did not arrive at the site until Sunday evening.

"EPA emergency hotlines are supposed to be staffed at all times for emergency situations just like this," Shuler said. "This problem was eventually resolved, but we must ensure that these hotlines are reliable and effective. Frankly, I am discouraged by this breakdown in communication and EPA's delayed response to this serious situation."

During a Congressional hearing last October in Asheville, Shuler urged EPA officials to improve communication with residents near the CTS site. He has since routinely posted updates on his Congressional Web site about assessment and cleanup activities conducted by EPA and the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Shuler today sent a letter to the EPA Inspector General in which he called for an assessment of the overall functionality of the emergency hotline and a formal investigation of events surrounding the contamination leakage this past weekend.

“It is vital that the residents affected by these events have access to the assistance and information that they deserve,” Shuler said. “I hope that EPA will investigate this issue and take steps to prevent similar situations from occurring in the future.”

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