

## Niagara newsmaker/ George Spira

# SCA wants permit for new hazardous waste landfill at Model City

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The state Department of Environmental Conservation will decide this week whether to issue a permit for a new landfill at SCA Chemical Services' Model City site on Balmer Road in the Town of Porter.

It would be the first hazardous waste landfill permit issued since DEC Commissioner Henry G. Williams announced last year the state's intention to reduce hazardous wastes from landfills as the first step in a gradual reduction of hazardous materials buried in landfills.

The proposed landfill would be SCA's ninth at the Model City site. SCA and Cecos, in Niagara Falls, operate the only commercial hazardous waste landfills in New York state.

Last week SCA Vice President and General Manager George Spira talked with the Gazette about the new landfill and the practice of landfilling hazardous waste.

**Q: Why does SCA need another landfill?**

A: As an all-purpose hazardous waste facility, one of the things that we need to properly service industry is the ability to store and deposit residues from chemical manufacturing in a secure landfill. Many companies as result of their operations end up with a material which has almost no value, but has some hazardous qualities which you would like to secure in the safest place in the environment. Right now, with our current technology, a secure landfill in this case happens to be the most secure location. That's why we need another secure landfill at our facility.

**Q: Are your existing landfills getting full?**

A: We have had landfills at our site since 1972 and at our current landfill, space is projected to run out in about six months.

**Q: How long do you project this new one will last?**

A: That depends on how much superfund cleanup work is done in the state of New York, it depends on how fast the federal government moves on releasing monies for cleanups in our locality so that we can increase our business flowing to our facility. If business remains as it is today, that landfill would probably last three years. If business were to increase by superfund releasing monies for the cleanup of all the hazardous waste sites in New York state, it might only last two years.

**Q: With the addition of this new landfill, how large would the entire SCA landfill area be?**

A: Our site is 750 acres. Out of the 750 acres, approximately 30 acres have been used for landfilling. This current landfill is about 5 acres, so we will have consumed about 35 acres of our site when this landfill is completed. Of that 750 acres on our site, only 200 of it is qualified for landfilling. The rest of it is all border property. We will never be able to use it as a landfill.

**Q: How would the operation of the new landfill differ from the operation of the existing landfill?**

A: From an operational point of view, it will be as



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carefully operated as all of our past landfills. From a regulatory point of view, there will be more severe limitations on what can and cannot go into a landfill in New York state.

**Q: How are those contents going to differ from previous landfills?**

A: Generally, you will not be allowed to accept some organic materials that you were able to accept in past landfills. That's about the only change in this landfill. We have moved ahead with more sophisticated designs, we are implementing a design which we developed at our Pinewood, S. Carolina facility, so we're trying new things and continuing to lead the way, but there is not going to be a significant change in the operation or function (of the landfill).

**Q: Will this new permit keep burnable waste out of the landfill, and require you to burn wastes that can be burned?**

A: I think it's important to understand that the majority of hazardous wastes which presently go into our secure landfill is not burnable. Probably 85 to 90 percent of what we are currently landfilling are metal hydroxide sludges from industry and dirt cleanups from major cleanup sites. You can't burn it and you never would want to burn it. So what this new permit would probably do is limit that small percentage of material, which is a troublesome material as far as landfill operation is concerned, and it's something that we really don't want to be landfilling. The question to answer and one that we all have to answer, is there capacity and technology available to take care of the material in some other fashion?

**Q: Is SCA looking into technologies for disposal of wastes other than landfilling?**

A: You have to understand that at our facility, much of the work we do has nothing to do with landfilling. For example, we are currently shipping about 200,000 gallons a month of burnable sludges from the state of New York to our Chicago incinerator for destruction. We're shipping about 100,000 gallons a month of aqueous materials to our high-quality treatment facility in Newark. We're sending pathological wastes from hospitals in New York state to our incinerator in Boston. We're shipping material all over this country for treatment at the most high technology locations. A lot of material comes in here that we treat and then ship out to other locations within our corporation, and the main area right now is PCB dirts, PCB sludges and PCB oils and liquids that are coming into Model City. We're giving them a first primary treatment, filtration or whatever it needs, then shipping to Chicago for destruction.

**Q: What percentage of the wastes coming into this site are landfilling here?**

A: Of all the material coming into the facility, probably 50 percent. That number changes depending on the business climate. In a month where we have a lot of contaminated dirt coming in from a major cleanup, I would tell you that 80 percent of the material coming in is landfilled. In a month when we don't have a big cleanup, maybe 30 percent of our material is being landfilled, the rest of it is going to our aqueous treatment system.

**Q: Is SCA, as a national firm, investigating new technologies that could eventually make landfilling obsolete?**

A: The answer to that question is yes. The evidence of that is a \$25 million expense over the last 2 years to build the highest quality technologically available incinerator in the world at our Chicago location. Up to now, it's been losing money. Hopefully, in the year 1984, that facility will turn around and start to make money. We have invested about \$10 million in Newark for the treatment of high-quality wastes, we spent about \$4 million in Boston to put in pathological incinerator facilities. We spend millions of dollars a year looking for high-technology options. Most of our sites do not have landfills. We only have three landfill sites: Model City, Pinewood, South Carolina, and Fort Wayne, Indiana.

**Q: Does the technology exist now to dispose of all wastes other than in landfills?**

A: No.

**Q: Are future technologies being investigated?**

A: When you look at the hazardous waste industry today, it's a very young industry. It's really only been in existence about 15 years. Prior to that, people were putting their waste in dumps throughout the nation. The waste industry has not received the support from industry in general over the last 15 years. In the last five years, most companies have said, hey, we've got to have a place to properly dispose of hazardous wastes. The technology is just now emerging. Over the next five years we're going to see breakthroughs in treatment and development of hazardous waste technologies that were unheard of before. But it takes money to do all this research and development. Until people want to pay the price it's not going to happen.

**Q: Is landfilling the cheapest disposal method?**

A: It is the cheapest disposal method, but it is not cheap to landfill in New York state. The requirements in this state are significantly more severe than they are in other states, for instance Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio. The requirements for landfilling there are almost nonexistent compared to New York state. So a customer in New York state could ship their waste for landfilling to an outside state for half the price to have it landfilled in New York state. That's why survival here is very difficult.

**Q: So why did SCA start a landfilling operation here instead of, say, in Pennsylvania?**

A: SCA purchased this facility in 1973. It had been sited back in 1971 as an excellent location to put in a hazardous waste facility. The hydrogeology of this site is so excellent that you have to go a long way to find a site that would even compare with the ability to landfill material that you have here. Forty, fifty, sixty-foot layers of impermeable clay under our landfill, that's the type of a facility you want to be able to put a landfill into. Also, this was a U.S. government operation since the second world war. This land was condemned, it was never to be used for farming or anything but industrial use. It was a perfect location from a hydrogeologic point of view and because it was an abandoned U.S. plant, and you had the industry in Buffalo and Niagara Falls to support it. Quite frankly, the industry of the area is very fortunate to have a quality hazardous waste disposal site right in its backyard, and they appreciate it.

**Q: Cecos is also involved in negotiations with the state over limiting burnable wastes in landfills. Are you hopeful the modifications to your permit to ban the landfilling of those chemicals will be applied to CECOS?**

A: The state of New York has acted with equality throughout the state of New York. They always have and always will. They will never put a condition upon us and not on our competition and vice versa. There is no question that when the state makes modifications or announces a ban, it will be statewide.