

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 19, 2007

Alan J. Steinberg
Regional Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency Region 2
290 Broadway
New York, New York 10007-1866

Dear Administrator Steinberg:

We are writing regarding a potentially dangerous situation at the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site - the cleanup of SR-6 at Cannon Mine, an area that has been extensively mined and that has experienced recent subsidence. As you know, numerous dangerous sinkholes have opened up in this vicinity and we believe it is critical to determine additional risk before proceeding with the use of heavy equipment for cleanup activities. This concern is shared by the residents of this area and borough officials.

The NJ Department of Environmental Protection responded to this safety issue by ordering Ford Motor Company and the Borough of Ringwood to conduct the appropriate geophysical studies in order to determine further risk of sinkholes. It is our understanding that the EPA has ordered Ford Motor Company to begin the cleanup work at SR-6, and ignore the DEP's Directive despite the fact that the cleanup will involve the use of heavy trucks and equipment which might result in the creation of more sinkholes.

We have both seen first-hand the sinkholes that have been developing on Van Dunk Lane, which has recently necessitated the evacuation and relocation of residents who lived there. As you are well aware, the Ringwood Mines/Landfill Superfund Site cleanup has been fraught with problems and has the distinction of being the first Superfund site to ever be de-listed and then re-listed. It is critical that the EPA do all it can to avoid risks and ensure the safety of the residents in the Cannon Mine area.

We are writing to urge EPA to immediately withdraw its order to Ford to resume activities. While we appreciate your desire to keep this cleanup moving forward, the physical safety of the residents needs to come first. EPA must ensure that all the work being conducted at a Superfund site is performed keeping the health and safety of the residents foremost in mind. We believe it is imperative that geophysical testing be conducted first before the cleanup resumes.

If the testing should prove that the cleanup can go forward without risk to the community, then the EPA can direct the PRP to proceed with the cleanup. However, if the testing shows that there is risk, then the EPA can look to other solutions, which could include offering voluntary temporary relocation to the residents whose homes are at risk, until the work is completed in this area of the site.

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We request that you maintain special focus on the immediate concern, the safety of the community, residents who have long suffered from a remediation that has failed them time and time again.

Thank you for your review of this matter and we look forward to your immediate response.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Robert Menendez in black ink.

ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator

Handwritten signature of Frank R. Lautenberg in black ink.

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG
United States Senator