

# Hazardous waste will no longer be stockpiled at landfill



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Writer

The investigation into what caused the hazardous materials fire at the Six Nations landfill two weeks ago is still on-going and Six Nations Band Council has declared that hazardous waste will no longer be stockpiled at the landfill.

Band Council had to call a state of emergency after numerous propane tanks and other hazardous materials caught fire and exploded at the Six Nations landfill site two weeks ago.

It took just over 10 minutes for three firefighters to avert what could have been a major environmental disaster as they quickly doused the fire, only to discover a dangerous mix of chemicals remained as a result of the explosions.

The ensuing fear of re-ignition of the chemical spill prompted band council to close the landfill and call a state of emergency as a haz-

ardous materials team from Hamilton undertook a careful clean-up of the spill.

A temporary dump was opened across the street from the Fourth Line Road landfill and residents within a 1600-metre radius had been placed on standby for a possible evacuation during the clean-up.

A contamination leak resulted from the explosions of chemical tanks, including propane tanks, helium tanks, aerosol cans and others that had been piling up at the site. A worker at the dump heard the tanks exploding and called the fire department who were on site within minutes.

"At this time we are unable to determine the exact cause of the fire but the investigation is still on going," said Six Nations Fire Chief Matthew Miller in an e-mail.

The landfill site has since reopened to the public.

By yesterday (Tuesday), the area had been cleaned and

the Hazmat team had left, but remnants of the fire and hazardous material were still visible in the area behind the recycling station.

Charred concrete and soil and leftover foam spray still linger in the area, as well as a few cans of aerosol containers and old light bulbs that one worker at the dump, who wanted to remain anonymous, suspects is leaking mercury.

An unpleasant chemical odor still lingers in the air.

Six Nations Band Council has not finalized the cost of the fire and clean-up but waste management company Tervita estimated it to be around \$100,000.

Band Council was not able to answer by press time if it was able to receive emergency funding from the federal government to deal with the crisis.

Fire Chief Matthew Miller says his department is still unable to determine what caused the fire.

"The Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal was contacted to assist with the investigation but informed us as a result of it being a hazardous materials incident they were not equipped to conduct a Hazmat investigation, and would not be sending any investigators to assist as a result."

The Fire Marshall's office also recommended Six Nations firefighters not enter the zone, he said.

"They did not recommend that we enter the hot zone but to document as much as possible from a safe distance," said Miller.

He said the Hazmat team from Tervita documented the entire clean-up operation and once their report is provided to the Six Nations Fire Department, the Six Nations Police will assist with the rest

of the investigation.

In the meantime, band council's Public Works department is not allowing hazardous waste to pile up at the landfill site again.

"Hazardous waste will no longer be stockpiled at the landfill," said Michael Montour, public works director.

"Residents will be advised to safely store their household hazardous materials at home or take them to a designated disposal facility until Public Works holds a Household Hazardous Waste Event. This information will be provided to each resident in Six Nations and will also be available at the landfill. Household hazardous waste will only be accepted at the Six Nations Landfill site during a Household Hazardous Waste Event, which will now be held every May and November."

Band Council says the landfill site is now secure and nearby residents are no longer on alert for evacuation.

The explosions occurred just a week after band council decided not to move forward with the purchase of a controversial, \$5 million incinerator currently sitting idle at the landfill site that inventor John Kearns claims could have safely eliminated hazardous waste.

Band Council has spent almost \$800,000 trying to bring the incinerator to Six Nations to deal with the overflowing landfill and is now facing legal threats from Kearns for what he claims is "breach of contract."

Band Council says it is "studying the next steps" in dealing with the community's on-going waste crisis.