

## **EXPLOSIONS AND FIRES AT DUMPS (LANDFILLS)**

**According to the U.S. Fire Administration, there are fires at 8,300 dumps each year. Heat from decaying trash can ignite the gases within a dump, resulting in fires that can spread underground for miles.**

### **FLORIDA**

#### **Orlando**

1998 – The Walt Disney World construction landfill, where asbestos is buried, catches fire. Two nearby golf courses are closed because officials fear the smoke might be contaminated.

#### **Southern Charlotte County**

2006 – Officials believe spontaneous combustion sparked the fire deep in the mountain of waste at Southwest Developer's private construction and demolition landfill on Zemel Road.

### **GEORGIA**

#### **Savannah**

1991 – Chatham County Police evacuate 44 families in the Weatherwood subdivision when methane gas is measured at explosive concentrations in the landfill beneath their homes. Residents file a \$20 million lawsuit against the state, the county and Weatherwood's developers, charging negligence and property devaluation.

### **ILLINOIS**

#### **Naperville (Chicago suburb)**

2004 – Fires from spontaneous combustion burn in the dump beneath the Greene Valley Forest Preserve. A grass fire that erupted on the surface had been extinguished, but the underground fires continue for months.

### **INDIANA**

#### **Wabash**

1987 - People are forced to evacuate their homes and businesses when a fire erupts at a nearby toxic waste dump.

### **KENTUCKY**

#### **Riverside Gardens (near Louisville)**

1975 – Methane gas from the 112-acre Lees Lane Landfill causes flash fires and forces the evacuation of seven families in the adjacent Riverside Gardens neighborhood. Residents report flames shooting up near their water heaters.

2003 - Federal officials ask for an investigation of the gas-collection system at the landfill because methane gas levels have risen in recent years.

### **MARYLAND**

#### **Fort Meade**

2006 – Fearing an explosion of methane gas, the Army evacuates a dozen families from homes built near a 60-year-old military dump.

## **MICHIGAN**

### **Rochester Hills (suburb of Detroit)**

2000 - A house explodes in the middle of the night when gases migrate from the adjacent Six Star Landfill. The residents are able to escape, but their dog dies in the explosion. Eleven other homes on the block are evacuated after methane gas is measured at high concentrations under the neighborhood.

## **NEW YORK**

### **Village of Port Washington, North Hempstead**

Early 1980s – Gases from the Port Washington Landfill migrate offsite on at least 4 occasions, causing explosions in nearby homes.

1995 – A driving range snack bar being constructed on the closed landfill explodes after a water heater kicks on, igniting the landfill gases.

## **NORTH CAROLINA**

### **Charlotte**

1995 - A soccer mom goes to retrieve a stray ball that has fallen into an eroded hole at Renaissance Park, a former dump. She pulls out a lighter to see in the shadows, igniting a fireball that blows her several feet back from the methane-filled hole. Fortunately, she suffers only minor burns.

## **OHIO**

### **Dayton**

1996 - Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Emergency Response personnel are called in to mitigate an underground fire at the North Sanitary Landfill. Carcinogenic chemicals from the 102-acre landfill are found in two municipal well fields that provide people in the greater Dayton metropolitan area with drinking water.

## **VIRGINIA**

### **Arlington**

1943 - The Pentagon is built on top of 29-acres of wasteland, swamps and dumps.

2001 – Underground fires continue to burn weeks after the 9/11 attack.