

The Battalion

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Government carries burden of pollution cleanup

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EPA fails to recover \$270 million in charges against toxic waste polluters

WASHINGTON — The government already has written off \$270 million that it was supposed to charge polluters for cleanup of the nation's worst toxic waste sites and faces absorbing hundreds of millions more, an Associated Press review has found.

The Environmental Protection Agency says in many cases the polluters have disappeared or are unable to pay. In others, it says it simply lacks the manpower or evidence to file lawsuits.

The situation appears to be worsening for the Superfund program, which Congress created 13

years ago with the intention that polluters — not taxpayers — pay for cleanup of hazardous sites.

"The number of cases that are eligible for cost recovery greatly exceeds the capacity of available resources," Richard Guimond, acting assistant administrator for Superfund, wrote in a March 26 memo.

"This situation is likely to become more difficult in the near future."

Internal EPA figures obtained by the AP show the agency has recovered only \$843 million — or less than one-fifth — of the \$4.3 billion in cleanup costs that could

be recovered from polluters under the current law.

Of the remainder: —\$829 million is tied up in litigation or bankruptcy court.

—\$270 million has been written off with no chance of recovery.

—\$2.3 billion has yet to be pursued, with the legal deadline for suing for recovery in most of those cases expiring in the next few years.

The statute of limitation in Superfund cases, which is six years from the start of a cleanup, makes it impossible to go after polluters after the deadline has passed.

Chad Littleton, a Superfund program analyst, said EPA expects to write off another \$170 million in recoverable costs next year alone and eventually anticipates between 30 percent and 50 percent of pending cases will reach the same fate.

In addition to the inability to locate some responsible polluters, EPA has decided not to pursue most cases in which the potential recovery is below \$200,000, because of high legal costs.

Among the writeoffs is a project in three suburban New Jersey communities where officials esti-

mate the cost to taxpayers eventually may reach \$200 million.

The government is removing radon-contaminated soil from more than 700 properties, with the suspected polluter a defunct nearby industrial plant that made luminous watch dials until 1926.

EPA Administrator Carol Browner recently directed a task force to figure out ways to handle cost recovery more efficiently as the agency seeks to resolve the worsening crunch.

"We are trying to make sure we set priorities to make sure the urgent cases are handled first,"

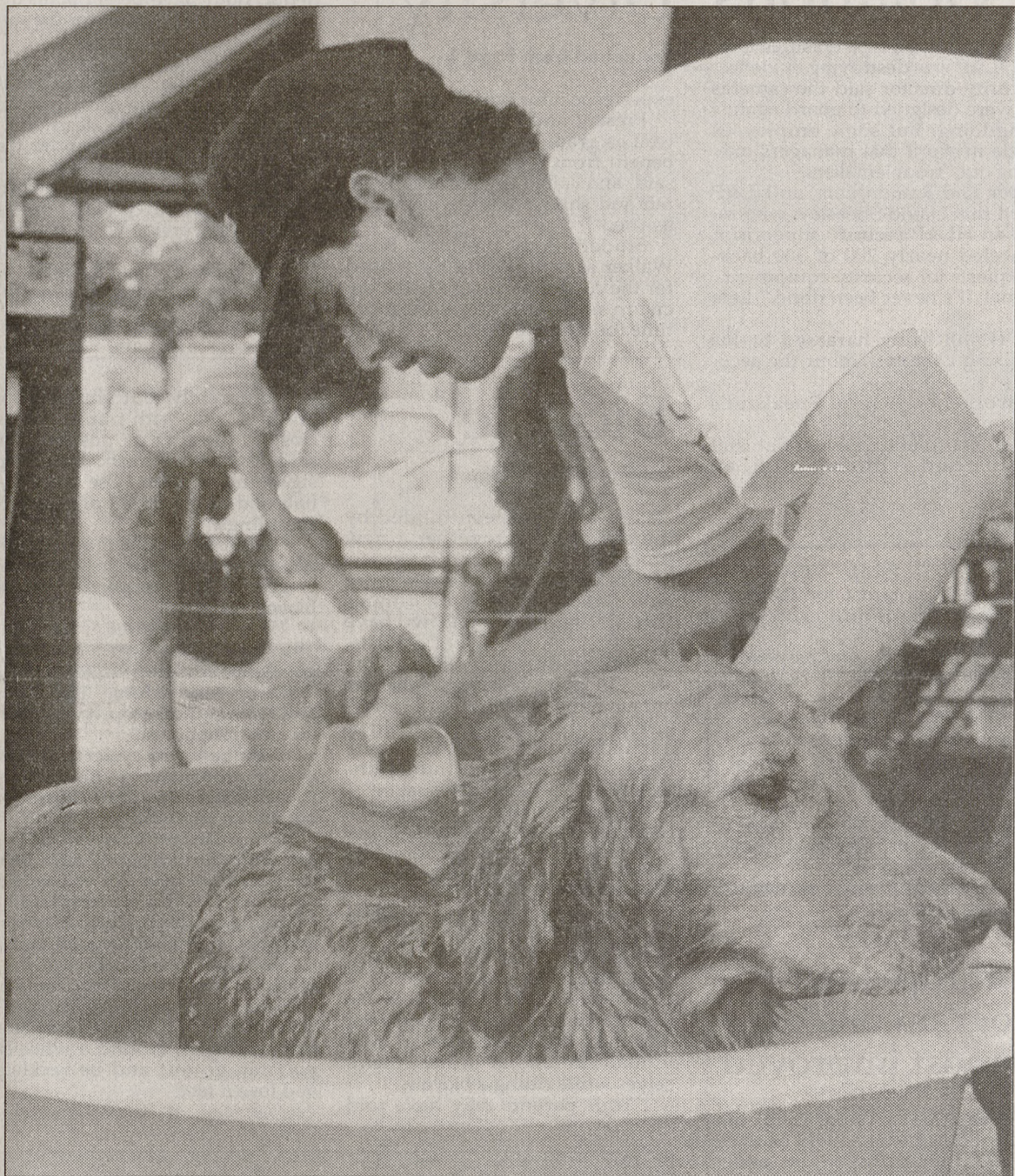
said Mike Vandenberg, a senior policy adviser for Browner.

But critics aren't convinced the agency has done all it can to recover the tax dollars spent on Superfund.

"I can't imagine the government not trying to collect every penny from corporate polluters," said Charles Lewis, executive director of the government watchdog Center for Public Integrity. He called the EPA writeoffs "unacceptable."

The EPA's inspector general believes Superfund officials were not aggressive enough. "Cost recoveries were not always vigorously pursued or maximized," John Martin wrote in a March 31 report.

Dog day afternoon



RICHARD DIXON/The Battalion

Jason Jamison, a business major from Bryan, gives Samantha a flea dip Saturday afternoon. A&M Vet School once a year. The cost was \$5 per dog. Jamison works at Producer's Co-op in North Bryan

Cultural diversity mandate provokes varied responses

By JASON COX

The Battalion

The recent decision by the Texas A&M University Liberal Arts Council to require incoming liberal arts students to complete coursework in classes emphasizing cultural diversity has garnered positive and negative reactions statewide.

The new policy, which was adopted June 9, requires six hours of study in international and domestic areas, three of which must be concerned with race, ethnicity or gender issues in the United States.

A similar motion for a University-wide requirement is currently before the Faculty Senate, but will not be voted on until further study on the issue can be completed.

The Republican Party of Texas came out against the requirement June 13, passing a resolution condemning it as "a series of courses in victimology and a clear liberal political agenda."

In addition, the resolution called upon state legislators to restrict funding that would be used to "promote required politically correct indoctrination at state schools."

The Texas A&M of College Republicans followed suit by adopting a similar resolution, but which also asks former students to withhold financial contribu-

tions until the requirement is rescinded.

Not all reaction to the decision has been negative, however. Houston Post Columnist Robert C. Newberry wrote, "A&M is on the verge of taking a bold and necessary step to help its students get to know each other."

"To me, it is A&M's societal contribution to help end some of the hate, the fear and the separateness of the races in America," he said.

Newberry went on to write that white students tend to avoid taking such classes, and the ones who need them most "avoid them like the plague."

Tanya Williams, chairwoman of the A&M Black Awareness Committee, said she was pleased with the council's decision, but was not surprised at the amount of controversy it has generated.

"I am really glad they passed it," she said. "They're claiming students may not want it, but it is a step in the right direction."

Williams said campus relations should be based on respect, not only for other cultures, but for men, women and other organizations as well.

"It is taking a step out of the comfort zone and experiencing something new," Williams said. "We can do academic work all we want, but we need to

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Federal law to enforce free checking claims

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — From now on, by federal law, free checking really must be free.

Under the Truth in Savings Act, taking effect Monday, banks and savings institutions must offer clear, complete and uniform disclosures of the terms of their deposit accounts — both checking and savings.

Advertising must not be misleading or incomplete. For instance, checking advertised as free can carry no hidden charges or conditions.

"Any account advertised as free after June 21 cannot be what I call a 'free, asterisk' account," said Ed Mierzwinski, a lobbyist for the U.S. Public Interest Research Group, one of the consumer organizations that pushed for the law.

"It cannot charge regular main-

tenance or per-check fees or require balance minimums to avoid fees," he said. However, banks and S&Ls still can charge free checking customers for a box of checks and for automated teller transactions.

The act also bans the so-called "investable balance" method to pay interest. Under the method, a bank might advertise a 3 percent rate on savings accounts but pay it only on 90 percent of the balance, effectively reducing the rate to 2.7 percent.

Low-balance methods of calculating interest no longer will be permitted. Under one such system, customers earn interest only on their lowest daily balance for the month, instead of the average daily balance. Or, under another, an account dipping below the minimum balance for a single day would lose interest for the entire month.

"Truth in Savings will require

banks to pay interest on a consumer's full balance, each day," Mierzwinski said.

Another important change, according to consumer advocates, is the inauguration of annual percentage yield, or APY, a standardized method of expressing interest, taking into account the rate and compounding.

"Consumers will be able to compare apples to apples. Right now, they're comparing apples to oranges but they don't know it," said attorney Michelle Meier of Consumers' Union.

Customers no longer will have to try to figure out if 2 percent compounded daily is better than 2.2 percent without compounding. A hundred dollars deposited in an account, paying an APY of 2.24 percent, will earn \$2.24 in one year. A higher APY always means more interest.

A&M seeing more bike accidents, UPD says

By GENEEN PIPHER

The Battalion

The number of automobile-bicycle accidents are increasing on the Texas A&M University campus, according to the Texas A&M University Police Department.

Corporal Betty LeMay of the University Police Department said the increase in accidents is probably a result of a greater number of bicycles on campus

and a lack of obedience to bicycle laws.

"Bikes are more popular than they were before," she said. "Mopeds were the big thing for a while, but students have come back to bikes. The problem is that they don't realize it (bike riding) can be dangerous, and they don't follow the rules of the road."

LeMay said nine automobile-bicycle accidents were reported in the 1991-92 school year, but this

year's figure, which only includes reports to April, has jumped to 17.

Two weeks ago on Wellborn Road a 52 year-old man was struck and killed by a car while riding his bicycle.

Safety Education Department Research Assistant Les Campbell said safety is not something the average cyclist is thinking about while riding.

"It's like they have their own set of rules, but bikes are supposed to follow the same rules as cars," he said. "Many don't follow those rules at all. There seems to be an arrogance on the part of cyclists. Safety is, or seems to be, the last thing on their minds."

Dr. Maurice Dennis, Coordinator of Safety Education, said people should expect cyclists and walkers to do the wrong thing.

"If there is a cyclist ahead, slow down," he said. "Even if the guy is wrong, do all you can to prevent the accident."

LeMay said UPD has tried to promote bike safety through informational programs, but because of low turnouts they were discontinued.

But Campbell said his group is planning a different approach to bike safety

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Locals celebrate Juneteenth holiday

By JANET HOLDER

The Battalion

More than 150 people in College Station celebrated Juneteenth Saturday with religious songs, African dances and speeches at the Lincoln Recreation Center.

Juneteenth is a celebration recognizing the day when slaves in Texas were told about the Emancipation Proclamation, the decree which freed the slaves.

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln on Jan. 1, 1863, but news of the proclamation did not arrive in Texas until June 19. The day was given its name by blacks who decided to combine the month and the date together to form Juneteenth.

Lillian Robinson, director of the Lincoln Recreation Center, said the event is a time to reflect on black's progression toward total equality.

"Now we (blacks) take things for granted," she said. "Not so many years ago we couldn't vote, use public restrooms or water fountains and couldn't use waiting rooms. We fought to get this freedom, but we still have a lot to do."

Robinson said blacks need to remember the importance of freedom and continue to pursue it.

The main speaker at the Juneteenth festivities, Andrew White said, "We forgot what freedom really means. Freedom means to do something - to work."

White, director of Quality Control for Johnson & Johnson, said blacks need to stop complaining about discrimination at work and instead form their own businesses.

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STACY RYAN/The Battalion

Shannon Adams, a member of the Austin-based PAPE' Y PADE' Pan African Dance and Percussion Ensemble, dances to traditional African drum music at the Lincoln Recreation Center Saturday evening during the Juneteenth celebration.

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WEATHER

- Monday: Cloudy with showers/thunderstorms
- Forecast for Tuesday: mostly cloudy, scattered showers/thunderstorms

TEXAS LOTTO

- Saturday's winning lottery numbers: 4, 11, 22, 40, 44, 50
- Estimated lotto jackpot: \$3 million