

February 2, 2006

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

I write to inform you that I have reluctantly resigned my position as Senior Research Scientist and Coordinator of the Emerging Contaminants Program at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). I decided to give up my sixteen year career because it was obvious that MPCA would not adequately fund my work on emerging contaminants and would likely fire me if I continued to speak out about the issue.

Over the past year, several significant events demonstrated to me that my tenure as an MPCA scientist was limited. For example, since last November, I was instructed not to show up at my office at the MPCA, pending negotiation of settlement of my whistleblower lawsuit. As I understand it, the security guards at the building were directed to prevent me from entering! Although I wanted to settle the lawsuit in order to resolve the unfair treatment I received while simply trying to do my job, my hope and desire was also to return to the job I love. Unfortunately, the settlement agreement does not allow me to do so.

In my opinion, MPCA Commissioner Sheryl Corrigan and her top managers did not want the agency to fully investigate some toxic chemicals produced by 3M. Perfluorooctane-sulfonate (PFOS), one of the perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) that I was studying, is in the words of a former 3M chemist who worked with PFOS, "the most insidious pollutant since PCB. It is probably more damaging than PCB because it does not degrade, whereas PCB does; it is more toxic to wildlife; and its sink in the environment appears to be biota and not soil and sediment, as is the case with PCB."

Because my responsibility as Emerging Contaminant Coordinator dictated that these toxic chemicals be investigated, I felt obligated to pursue this work. However, since Ms. Corrigan left 3M to become MPCA Commissioner three years ago, I believe that MPCA top management has intentionally minimized the environmental monitoring of PFCs in Minnesota, even though my research has shown that PFC levels in the environment near some of the 3M facilities are among the highest concentrations reported anywhere in the world.

For the health and safety of Minnesotans, especially people living in those impacted communities, I believe the MPCA has an obligation to thoroughly investigate the extent of the contamination and the extent of exposure of Minnesotans. I am especially concerned about sensitive populations including, children and pregnant women.

I only wanted to do my work and my science. I have devoted the core of my career as a scientist to the people of Minnesota through the MPCA. I loved my job and had hoped to complete my career there.

I feel saddened by the loss of a career dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. A big part of who I am is being left behind. I worked so hard on my research and investigations only to see it go unfinished. While this hurts me deeply, I will not let it defeat me. I intend to continue my research in order to help protect the public from exposure to emerging, highly toxic contaminants.

It comes from my heart when I say it has been a privilege to have worked the last sixteen years with so many dedicated, knowledgeable, and highly skilled colleagues at the MPCA who are committed to serving the public. I will miss you all, and wish you the best in your important work. For many of you, I realize that times have been difficult in recent years, and I hope that the future will be more promising for all of us who care about public health and the environment.

Sincerely,

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