DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
Atlanta, GA 30333

May 19, 2006

Mr. Steven M. Arndt
President, Ottawa County Commissioners
315 Madison Street
Room 103
Port Clinton, Ohio 43452-1993

Dear Commissioner Arndt:

I am writing in response to your letter dated April 25, 2006, to update you on the status of our proposal to provide community members testing for beryllium sensitization. Since meeting with you in Ottawa County last April 25th, I have maintained contact with you and the Ottawa County Health Director, Ms. Nancy Osborn. A summary of our mutual understandings is included at the end of this letter. It is important to me personally, and to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), to work collaboratively with the public officials in Ottawa County. I hope we can continue to build a relationship that will benefit your county and the people you represent.

On April 25th, Mr. Witt (the Ottawa County Administrator) asked that we share with you a summary of the public comments we have received to date. I have enclosed our summary to this letter. A total of 37 people attended the public availability session; approximately 1/3 expressed interest in testing, 1/3 was undecided and 1/3 was employees of Brush Wellman who are not eligible. In addition, twenty-two people contacted us by phone and expressed interest in being tested. Clearly, there is some interest within the community for testing to occur.

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The BeLPT is not a research test. It is one of several tools used by companies and the U.S. Department of Energy to help prevent chronic beryllium disease in beryllium exposed workers. As stated by Dr. Deubner at your meeting on April 25th, more than 550 of the 600+ current Brush Wellman workers in Elmore, Ohio have been tested. In addition, the expert panel that met the morning of April 25th addressed many of the concerns about the interpretation of the test in this setting and provided good advice to us about setting realistic expectations and addressing community concerns. Dr. Borak stated that a single confirmed positive test for a machine shop worker or a household contact of a beryllium exposed worker should be interpreted as an indication that beryllium exposure from a workplace has likely occurred.

There remains some disagreement among the expert panel members about the likelihood that people without a worksite-related exposure to beryllium will have a confirmed abnormal BeLPT test (background rate). This can effect how we interpret a confirmed abnormal among those people who live within 1¼ mile of the Brush Wellman facility. At this time, the highest suggested background rates have been suggested by Brush Wellman as approximately 2% for a single abnormal test and 0.8% for a confirmed abnormal. These unpublished results were based on a sampling of adults who were seeking employment with Brush Wellman.

We are very interested in working with the Ottawa County Board of Health to design and implement a public service to residents of Ottawa County. My discussions with you and Ms. Osborn have focused on this issue. You shared with me a summary of comments received from community members. I understand that 67 people attended your meetings and that 9 provided written comments. The comments were wide-ranging and did not suggest a community-based consensus for follow-up. We agreed that the single most important activity for the Board of Health would be to provide health education information to local health providers and to community residents. ATSDR will assist Ms. Osborne in this effort.

At this point, ATSDR plans to proceed with our offer to test people in the community with the BeLPT. We hope to do this with your support. The reasons to move ahead now include:

- We have confirmed that people are interested in the test.
- The recognition by all parties that the BeLPT is a valid test for confirming sensitization to beryllium from past exposure.
- The understanding that individuals with a confirmed abnormal should be referred to a pulmonary specialist.

Many suggestions have been made which will be incorporated into our final plan. We will use two abnormal test results to define a confirmed abnormal. We will not release interim results based on a single BeLPT result. We will educate those seeking testing about the need for confirmative testing should their initial test be borderline or abnormal. We will remind people that our plan is not a scientific study and cannot be used to estimate beryllium sensitivity rates in the community. We will work with the Board of Health to validate the categories of

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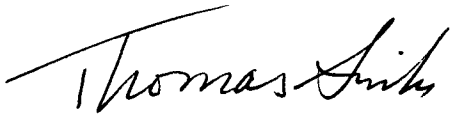
In the next few days we will be releasing our responses to the public comments and a summary of the advice from the expert panel. We will also begin re-contacting the people who have contacted us regarding the test. As we move forward we will maintain close contact with you and Ms. Osborn. We will also remain open to comments or suggestions.

Thank you again for your willingness to form a collaborative partnership with ATSDR on this project. Feel free to contact me at any time telephonically at (404) 498-0004 or via email at TSinks@cdc.gov should you have questions or concerns.

This identical response was also sent to Mr. Carl Koebel and Mr. John Papcun who co-signed your letter.

Sincerely,



Thomas Sinks, Ph.D.
Deputy Director
National Center for Environmental Health/
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

Enclosure

ATSDR Public Availability Meeting Summary – April 25, 2006
Woodmore High School – Elmore Ohio

Approximately 45 people attended the public availability meeting. However, only 37 people signed the ATSDR sign-in sheet. Those attending were from three major groups:

- former Brush Wellman workers and their household contacts,
- current Brush Wellman workers,
- local residents – some inside the 1.25 mile boundary, some not

The topics discussed included:

- accidents and releases at the Elmore Plant
- people they knew who had CBD
- our purpose in offering this community testing service
- differences of opinion they heard about the test
- reasons for not conducting a study
- eligibility criteria for the testing
- the difference between sensitization and chronic beryllium disease
- test characteristics – how well it would work
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The summary of expressed community interest from all sources is contained in the following table. The table reflects only the number of people who have volunteered their interest and may underestimate the true interest in the testing.

Summary of Community Interest April/May 2006
Number of persons expressing interest in
Testing for Beryllium Sensitization Plan
Elmore, Ottawa County Ohio

As of May 5, 2006 5:00 PM

Testing Plan

Eligibility Categories	Sources			Eligibility Category Subtotals
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Mr. Carl Koebel
Ottawa County Commissioners
315 Madison Street
Room 103
Port Clinton, Ohio 43452-1993

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Thomas Sinks

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