



# NAG

## Neighbors Against Garbage

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Williamsburg / Greenpoint

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February 20, 2004

Charles Cox  
The Executive Director for Operations  
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20555

RE: Petition Pursuant to 10 C.F.R. 2.206  
Radiac Research Corporation, Brooklyn, New York

### NRC MEETING COMMENTS

- A "predecessor organization" to NAG was referred to repeatedly during Radiac's comments, in order to justify Radiac's request to dismiss our Hearing Request. The organization referred to as a "predecessor organization" was WABBA (Williamsburg Around the Block Assoc.) which was formed around 1992 to do a lawsuit against DOT on the Williamsburg Bridge lead paint sandblasting; they later did a response to the DEC Radiac permit in 1994. NAG and WABBA have no common directors or board members, very few common membership individuals.
- Radiac is permitted by DEC to store explosives, so I think it is fair to assume that they do store some kinds of explosives.
- Since we are not permitted to read the DOL records of what waste Radiac actually handled, it is fair to assume that Radiac handles the waste it is permitted to handle, not just "diapers, medical waste, and traffic signs."

### COMMENTS PREPARED FOR THE NRC MEETING:

1. Radiac's alarm often sounded during the 90's (I am less frequently near Radiac now and don't know if the alarm still sounds often). During the early 90s they were required to have a 10-mile evacuation plan. I don't know when this requirement was withdrawn. I never knew what course of action to take when the alarm sounded. My friends in the community are always terrified when the alarm sounds.
2. Trucking: In 1998 I was driving from Williamsburg to DUMBO very late at night. I passed a low-riding tractor trailer on Flushing Avenue near the entrance to the Navy Yard with a large Radiac-labelled cab: the trailer's flatbed was marked with "radioactive" signs, there were 2 very large cylinders on the flatbed; there were flashing yellow lights; there was a police escort

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in front and behind. I remarked at the time that it was strange to carry such a large and obviously dangerous load in such a densely populated residential area. In addition, the streets are notoriously full of potholes. Flushing Avenue and Kent Avenue are the 2 main truck thoroughfares in Fort Greene and West Williamsburg. Kent Avenue has been in the City budget for resurfacing ever since 1992. It is a dangerous, bumpy road with fast-moving transfer station trucks, tractor-trailers, and frequently stopping local delivery trucks.

3. Radiac's normal off-loading practice has always been to park on Kent Avenue and to unload the trailers by skid-jack or hand truck *right on Kent Avenue*. Facility doors have always been left open for much of the daytime (this is not currently true, but only changed after we began writing letters about the facility). See photos (1 & 2). Trucks are often backed up to one another as materials are moved between them. It seems inappropriate to move hazardous chemical waste/radioactive waste over streets in residential areas that are in such bad condition and so heavily trafficked.
4. **Security** – There is no noticeable security at Radiac. The top of the building is covered with current graffiti, but no razor wire. A local resident spent 1 hour on their roof photographing Radiac/the neighborhood without notice or apprehension. Radiac claims to have security cameras: they are not visible from the outside of the building. The security guards are not often visible - when they are in evidence, they look like they are reading a book. When I have taken photographs on street level right at the open door, no-one has ever approached me.
  1. There have been two near-terrorist events in the past 3 years that the 90<sup>th</sup> Precinct told the Community Board 1 Health and Safety Committee about in 2003. The police found an abandoned rocket launcher facing the Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) Storage on the Keyspan site in East Williamsburg. They also found, through an informant, a hand-held rock propelled grenade launcher in a public housing project across from the U.N. in Long Island City. New York is subject to these kinds of attacks. In my loft (an old factory building) building recently, a truck backed through a roll-up door and into the factory to rob it. The roll-up door at Radiac is the same kind of door. It has no protective bar which would keep a truck from forcing its way into the facility to either steal or explode radioactive waste.
5. The night (December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2003) before the Homeland Security meeting on Radiac, I saw 5 large Radiac tractor-trailers heading down Kent Avenue. I remember thinking that they were probably emptying their warehouse of waste for an inspection – I don't know if that is what was happening, but if not, it was an unusual coincidence. In the comments of Radiac's DEC inspector during the 1990s, the inspector complained that DOL always gave advance notice of their inspections.
6. **Past Incidents:** it is not true that Radiac has not had past incidents. The DEC Inspector's reports from the late 1980s to the early 1990s had reports of an "open floor drain" which was not allowable under the DEC Permit. If the drain was closed and re-opened on at least 3 occasions, it stands to reason that it was used to wash chemicals down the drain from spills. The 3-1-2001 Heptane Spill in New Jersey is documented and this is the chemical of that Radiac's fire consultant highlighted for its flashover potential.

7. **The Sprinkler System** - This year the Williamsburg community lost the nearby Engine 212. This ladder company was the support foam unit to the Haz Mat team: these firemen also had limited Haz Mat training and did special trainings to respond with speed to a disaster at Radiac. The community's anxiety about the slow (45 seconds-1 minute activation time) sprinkler system in the Hazardous Chemical Waste storage facility of Radiac and the potential for flashover to the radioactive waste storage was tempered by knowledge of the speedy arrival and training of the Engine 212 company. That is now not much reassurance – we are left with the potential of a hot heptane-fueled fire with “flashover” in 45 seconds, i.e. the sprinkler system would activate about the same time the radioactive waste went up in flames, or **too late**.
  
8. **Waterfront Rezoning** - The current rezoning of the Greenpoint/Williamsburg waterfront is going to result in a net increase of 7,475 dwelling units. (City Planning Rezoning EAS Part I, 3b). There will be an influx of some 18,687.50 new residents within the next 10 years according to New York City Planning, just along the waterfront. Pratt Institute Planning Center projects that some 12,000 units will be built district-wide in rolling zoning changes during the same 10-year period resulting in 30,000 new residents.

Much of the new development will occur along the waterfront, adjacent to Radiac (see NYC Planning, Rezoning of Greenpoint/Williamsburg Waterfront on the NYC Website), in 20-30 story buildings. In a district already experiencing gentrification, under-protected by Fire, EMS, and Hospital/Primary Care, sits Radiac, a dirty bomb waiting for ignition. As the population grows, the need for the NRC to protect the community from threats as severe and obvious as Radiac becomes even more urgent. It is inappropriate to continue to permit a facility that operates without a buffer zone by definition: the facility footprint is not big enough under present-day NFPA code to allow for more than several of the many chemicals permitted under the DEC Permit, much less the radioactive waste storage. In the post-9/11 climate, it is an appropriate moment to observe the Department of Justice conclusion that “the risk of an attempt in the foreseeable future to cause an industrial chemical release is both real and credible” and that the highest risk is such facilities near population centers. With the reasonable expectation of an accident and fire from a Heptane spill that could reach “a peak heat release of the magnitude of 20 megawatts within seconds” (Radiac’s own fire consultant from “Fire Protection Report & Analysis”), the reasonable expectation of the protective agency, the NRC, at this moment in time, is to close the Radiac facility.

Sincerely yours,

Deborah Masters  
Pollution Prevention Coordinator, NAG  
Chair of the CB1 Environmental Committee







