

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Consequences of Illegal Dumping Trash and Tires

- Northumberland County pit fire fueled by illegally dumped tires -

Illegally dumped tires may be fueling a fire located inside an abandoned mine opening south of Trevorton in Zerbe Township, Northumberland County. The underground fire is thought to have spread to a coal seam. Local officials, first responders and the PA Department of Environmental Protection are working to contain the fire by bringing in large amounts of water and potentially a specialized contractor with firefighting foam or inert gas. The mine has minimal access, adding another obstacle to the effort. This recent incident is reminiscent of the Centralia mine fire that started decades ago and is still burning today. The origin of that fire has been debated, but one hypothesis is that it also started when a trash pit fire ignited a coal seam. The whole town had to be relocated.

Tire pile fires can be started intentionally or unintentionally, and can burn for long periods of time. When tires burn, it creates air pollution, and the burning rubber can decompose into oil, which can pollute groundwater and surface water.

While illegal dumping happens in both rural and urban areas, it is most likely to occur in remote and secluded places, rural areas where few people live and the roads are less traveled. According to the Department of Environmental Protection's website, Pennsylvania has 12 scrap tire piles that contain 10,000 tires or more. There is no doubt that many more smaller piles exist across the state.

The risks that scrap tires pose are many. They not only provide a prime breeding ground for mosquitoes that transmit West Nile Virus, but when stored outside or illegally dumped, can leach toxic chemicals that contaminate soil and water causing serious harm to humans, wildlife and the environment. Scrap tires burn easily and are hard to extinguish.

"Illegally dumped trash and tires pose an abundance of health and safety hazards. Disposing of unwanted items properly in the first place is not only more cost effective, but it reduces situations like the one we are seeing at the abandoned mine near Trevorton. Options are available. Special collections provide a convenient, affordable option for disposing items such as tires. Visit our website's Calendar of Events at keeppabeautiful.org for special collections near you, or contact your county's Recycling Coordinator. We all need to be responsible for disposing our waste correctly," said Shannon Reiter, President of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.

For more information on DEP's Waste Tire Program, including a link to the Waste Tire Recycling Act and a list of ongoing waste tire collection programs sponsored by counties, municipalities or

county/municipal authorities, please visit

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Land/Waste/SolidWaste/Tires/Pages/default.aspx>.

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About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's vision is a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Since 1990, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has worked with hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the state to pick up nearly 148 million pounds of trash from Pennsylvania's roadways, waterways, greenways, vacant lots, forestlands and other community spaces. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's core programming focuses on litter and illegal dump prevention, cleanup, community greening, and proper waste handling and sustainable practices. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful works with many partnering organizations on the state and grassroots level to accomplish our goal of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. To learn more about Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, visit www.keeppabeautiful.org.