# Times Beach, Missouri Encyclopedia Article

## Times Beach, Missouri

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# Times Beach, Missouri

According to former mayor Marilyn Leistner, the 2,000 residents of Times Beach, Missouri, a community located along the Meramec River, endured a lasting toxic waste episode throughout the Christmas holiday season of 1982. In 1974 the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) identified dioxincontaminated waste oil as the cause of death for an unspecified number of dogs and songbirds in Times Beach. In the early 1970s, many municipalities, including Times Beach, commissioned the use of waste oil to control dust on unpaved roads.

On December 3, 1982, in response to local complaints spurred by the CDC's earlier findings, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted soil tests in Times Beach. Floodwaters from the Meramec forced the evacuation of the entire community the very next day. On December 23 the CDC received the EPA's Times Beach soil test results. Because dioxin levels in the soil significantly exceeded public health standards, officials recommended that Times Beach residents not return home.

The Times Beach episode exemplifies how agencies can use their financial and legal resources to address environmental risks to public health. On February 23, 1983, for instance, former EPA Director Anne Burford announced a $25 million plan to buy out the homes and businesses of Times Beach through the Superfund program. Later, a presidential commission on this environmental pollution episode fined Syntex Agribusiness $200 million for their culpability. Syntex Agribusiness produced the dioxin as a waste product in manufacturing pesticides. Russell Bliss, a commercial waste hauler, transported the dioxin from Syntex Agribusiness, mixed the chemical with waste oil, and then, for a fee, sprayed the oil on Times Beach roads. Between 1996 and 1997 Missouri officials, using an environmentally controversial incineration technique, restored the former Times Beach site and turned what was Times Beach into a state park on and dedicated to U.S. Route 66.

## Bibliography

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