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**Title:** EPA's CAROL BROWNER ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION IN EMERGENCY FUNDS FOR WOONASQUATUCKET CLEANUP

**FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20, 1999**

**EPA's CAROL BROWNER ANNOUNCES \$1 MILLION IN EMERGENCY FUNDS FOR WOONASQUATUCKET CLEANUP**

Carol M. Browner, Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, today announced that \$1 million is being made available to protect public health and the environment from dioxin contamination in the Woonasquatucket River in Rhode Island while the EPA, the state and the community develop a long-term Action Plan to remedy the problem.

"Today, we are making an additional \$1 million available to protect the people of Rhode Island from the dioxin-contaminated riverbanks of the Woonasquatucket," Browner said. "I am especially concerned about contaminated areas where children play or senior citizens reside. By funding these actions today, the EPA, the state and the community will be in a better position to protect public health and the environment in that area next spring, when the possibility of human exposure to contaminated areas is greater."

The money will immediately be used to ensure that public health is fully protected through a number of actions the EPA is taking with Rhode Island, including, additional sampling in and along the river, more aggressive community outreach efforts about dioxin contamination and continuation of limiting public access to contaminated areas.

Browner's announcement today comes one week after the EPA's New England Office made public preliminary sampling results showing elevated dioxin levels in three locations alongside the river, with the highest levels being found at the Centredale Manor elderly

housing property in North Providence. The EPA has begun additional sampling in the riverbank area, including the Centredale property and the Lee Romano baseball field and the Boys and Girls Club property, all in North Providence. More comprehensive sampling will be done in February and March.

A Management Action Committee, comprised of community leaders, state officials, federal health experts and EPA staff, is being formed this week to help guide the overall investigation and contribute to an Action Plan which will provide Rhode Island residents with long-term protection from dioxin contamination in the river..

"Administrator Browner's attention to this issue will substantially help us to fully meet our responsibilities to the community," said John P. DeVillars, regional administrator of the EPA's New England Office. "We appreciate the cooperation and effort provided by the entire Rhode Island congressional delegation, and we look forward to continued work with them."

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