



New York State Archives

**New York State Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure
Working Files B0639**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	The New York State Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure was created to gather information and inform the public, specifically Vietnam veterans about the hazardous effects of herbicides, particularly those containing dioxin, a chemical in Agent Orange. This series consists of subject and correspondence files, reports, press clippings, minutes of hearings and meetings, maps, and video-cassettes documenting the activities of the Commission. Topics addressed include: exposure, health related issues, awareness of use, veterans' benefits, chemical warfare, and Right to Know.
Creator:	New York (State). Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure
Title:	Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure working files
Quantity:	25 cubic feet
Inclusive Date:	1973-1983
Bulk Date:	(bulk 1980-1983)
Series:	B0639

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Arrangement

Organized into five subseries: 1. Subject and Correspondence Files; 2. Press Clippings; 3. Minutes of Hearings and Meetings; 4. Maps; 5. Audiovisual Materials.

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Administrative History

The New York State Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure was created and its duties defined by Chapter 353 of the Laws of 1980. The commission's purpose was to inform the public, specifically Vietnam veterans and their families, about the hazardous effects of herbicides, particularly those containing dioxin. Dioxin is a chemical found in Agent Orange, a

herbicide that was used liberally in the Vietnam Conflict to defoliate vegetation, thereby denying enemy combatants cover and concealment. It was only after extensive use of the chemical that its toxic effects became apparent. At the time of the commission's formation, the federal government would not provide compensation to veterans for dioxin related complications. Little was known scientifically about dioxin exposure in humans. The commission's role was to provide evidence of the dangers of chemical exposure and draw awareness to the issues faced by Vietnam-era veterans and the general public.

The temporary commission was created within the Department of Health to gather information concerning the health related effects of dioxin exposure in Vietnam-era veterans. The commission's duties included determining the medical, administrative and social care necessary to aid exposed individuals; to circulate materials informing the public of available assistance and related scientific studies; and to conduct an extensive outreach program to encourage the concerned public to contact the commission for information. The commission's outreach program advised the public on health risks of exposure to hazardous chemicals through bilingual (English and Spanish) radio and television public service announcements, posters, brochures, and advertisements. Aid was extended to other states wishing to create their own commissions on dioxin exposure.

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Scope and Content Note

This series contains subject and correspondence files, press clippings, minutes of hearings and meetings, maps, and video-cassettes documenting the activities of the New York State Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure.

Subseries One, subject and correspondence files, includes subject files, reports, outreach files, correspondence, and out of state commission files. Subject and Correspondence Files can be found within boxes: 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 20, 22 and 24.

Subject files document a wide variety of topics: veteran employment services; assistance and insurance information for Agent Orange victims; correspondence regarding the temporary state commission's functions; materials reflecting the commission's business such as budget and travel vouchers, testimonies, and hearing information; requests for committee information; committee meeting minutes; literature regarding chemical pollution and public exposure; and newspaper clippings about chemical exposure in veterans. Subject Files are found within boxes 4, 7, 13, 14, and 22.

Reports describe the consequences of herbicide use, specifically dioxin and its component chemicals, in the United States and during the Vietnam War. These reports document dioxin exposure and its effect on the environment and public health and contain information explaining the chemical make up of dioxins; toxicology and lab reports; health information for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange; health information for individuals exposed to dioxins; materials on hearings regarding Agent Orange; information about veterans' benefits; reports

presenting counterpoints to the negative effects of herbicides; studies of mortality rates among veterans; materials from various government agencies and sources discussing findings related to dioxin exposure; contact information for government and local agencies that supply aid to veterans; chemical warfare information; and environmental cleanup information. Reports include originals and copies.

Reports are found within boxes 1, 3, 7, 10, and 11. Specifically, box 10 includes digests of laws regarding the disabled population, a listing of pesticide producing establishments, and a register of solid waste management facilities throughout New York. Box 11 holds directories on information resources, library systems, and aid to veterans.

In fulfilling the outreach component of its mandate, the temporary state commission provided information to individuals and government agencies, both in and outside New York State, concerning dioxin exposure. Outreach materials include requests for literature; contact information for informational resources such as libraries, veterans organizations, and counseling services; documents referring to the Right to Know Bill which promotes awareness of dioxin exposure; correspondence regarding the temporary commission's business activities; informational brochures; news articles; reports on herbicides; dioxin information kit materials distributed under the title 'What You Need to Know About Dioxin'; public service announcements; advocacy materials; notices about commission programs and reports regarding veterans exposed to dioxin; and transcripts from Veteran's Administration proceedings. Outreach files are within boxes 9 and 20.

Correspondence files document the day to day activities of the commission and include letters from individuals and agencies requesting dioxin related information. Correspondence files are within boxes 8 and 24.

Out of state commission files pertain to Agent Orange programs nationwide. These materials include contact information and correspondence between the commission and other states requesting assistance in forming commissions themselves. Out of state commission files are within Box 16.

Subseries Two, press clippings, includes news related to dioxin and Agent Orange exposure. Coverage focuses on environmental and health related issues associated with exposure to herbicides, especially among veterans; court cases; and chemical cleanup. Articles are arranged in chronological order. Materials are within boxes 5, 10 and 21 and in portions of boxes 4, 6, and 7.

Subseries Three, minutes of hearings and meetings, contains first-hand accounts of individuals exposed to herbicides containing dioxin. Minutes document discussions of health related issues, means in which individuals sought aid, and the extent of that assistance. Hearing minutes include statements from veterans; lawyers; representatives from medical, scientific, environmental, and agricultural fields; and representatives of chemical companies. Meeting minutes document the commission's meetings and conferences. Materials are within boxes 15, 17 and 18 and in portions of boxes 4, 6, 7, 8, and 13. Box 6 holds transcriptions and audio cassettes documenting a dioxin conference.

Subseries Four, maps, illustrates locations of defoliation missions in South Vietnam and surrounding countries. Materials are within box 26 and portions of boxes 23 and 25.

Subseries Five, audiovisual materials, contains motion picture video and radio public service announcements that were originally produced in a variety of formats. Public service announcements explaining the seriousness of dioxin exposure were directed toward veterans and their families. The public was encouraged to contact the commission for more information. Materials are found within boxes 2, 12, 18 and 19 and portions of 6, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23 and 25. Boxes 2, 12, 19 and 25 hold films and public service announcement materials. Boxes 2, 12 and 23 hold radio and television public service announcements in both English and Spanish. Box 19 includes small colored slides with images used for public service information. Boxes 6, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 22 hold audio versions of commission hearings or meetings. Box 20 contains one unlabeled roll of film. Note: portions of the audiovisual materials have been digitized. Please contact the State Archives for further information.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Container list is available at the repository.

Inventory of subject files is located in Box 7.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Alternate Formats Available

Items Online

Selected audiovisual materials in this series have been digitized and are available in State Archives Digital Collections.

[Temporary Commission on Dioxin Exposure working files, 1973-1983](#)

Administrative Information

Custodial History

Collation date 1982-1983.

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Access Terms

- Veterans--Health and hygiene
- Dioxins--Health aspects
- Videotapes
- Maps (documents)
- New York (State)
- Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Chemical warfare
- Minutes (administrative records)
- Photographs
- Clippings (information artifacts)
- Motion pictures (visual works)
- Vietnam War, 1961-1975--Veterans--Health risk assessment
- Agent Orange--Health aspects
- Photoprints
- Investigating
- Tetrachlorodibenzodioxin
- Veterans--Diseases--New York (State)
- New York (State). Department of Health