

Oct. 20: Peaceful Protest in Merrimack against St. Gobain PFAS contamination

manchesterinklink.com/oct-20-peaceful-protest-in-merrimack-against-st-gobain-pfas-contamination/

Chris Dugan

October 19, 2019

RECEIVED
OCT 21 2019
HORSHAM WATER AND
SEWER AUTHORITY



File Photo

MERRIMACK, NH — On Sunday, October 20 from 1 – 3 p.m., residents and supporters will line Daniel Webster Highway starting across from the St. Gobain’s entrance (701 Daniel Webster Hwy. Merrimack) and leading into town. Protestors will hold signs and wear medical face masks in order to send a clear message to St. Gobain that they are tired of the constant contamination and health impacts to the town and that St. Gobain needs to stop contaminating Merrimack.

PFAS chemicals from St. Gobain are comprised of a group of about 6,000 chemicals that are commonly found in products like Teflon, fire foam, waterproof and fire-retardant items. The chemicals are considered “forever” chemicals because they do not break down; once they are in the environment, they will always be there. Due to St. Gobain’s use and methods of disposal, these chemicals are found throughout Merrimack’s air, water and land. PFAS chemicals have been linked to serious illness and disease including cancers, learning disabilities in babies that have been exposed to PFAS in utero, high blood pressure, kidney disease and thyroid disruption to name just a few conditions. Because of St. Gobain’s contamination, Merrimack will be spending millions to filter its public water. Private well owners will also have to pay to filter their own contaminated water.

"The idea for a protest started because of a resident's Facebook post," explained Wendy Thomas, NH State Representative for Merrimack and the organizer of the protest. "Someone saw that the Bow coal plant had been protested and suggested that something like that be done in Merrimack. I replied that I agreed and that I'd help organize such a protest. People are absolutely sick and tired of this company continuing to contaminate our town."

Thomas is one of the three Merrimack "Water Warrior Reps" who ran in 2018 and won. She has been involved in the PFAS water contamination issue for years.

In recent weeks, the Merrimack Town Council sent letters to St Gobain and NH DES quoting data from the NH DES website demonstrating increased levels of these chemicals. The Town Council asked NH DES to stop the operations at St Gobain's Merrimack plant until the pollution stops. Merrimack's Town Council has also met with Sen. Jeanne Shaheen and Rep. Chris Pappas to review the data with them. The decision to send the letter resulted from the recent testing results of a ground water well near the plant that measured 69,500 ppt for PFOA. A dip pan in the facility measured 25,600 ppt for PFOA and 160,000 ppt for PFNA on April 30, 2019, and on May 1, 2019, the PFOA result was 21,100 ppt and PFNA was at 128,000 ppt. The current maximum value in New Hampshire for PFOA is 12 ppt and for PFNA it is 11 ppt. "The message that we want to send is that "enough is enough," said Thomas.