



# EPA and DEQ brief locals on J.H. Baxter cleanup, including possible Superfund status

KLCC | By **Brian Bull**

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*Brian Bull / KLCC*

The J.H. Baxter wood treatment facility in Eugene, which closed in January 2022.

The shuttered J.H. Baxter plant in Eugene may become a federal “Superfund” site.

Long a target of complaints from neighbors and probes by state and federal government agencies, the plant officially closed in January 2022 after 80 years.

Recently, representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the

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A crowd of about 50 people from the Bethel Neighborhood listen to Randy Nattis of the EPA give a presentation on J.H. Baxter. Many locals are concerned about potentially harmful environmental effects the company's Eugene plant may have caused to their soil, air, and water.

Besides roughly 50 locals, representatives from partner agencies and advocacy organizations were present, including Beyond Toxics, the City of Eugene, and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA.)

Before the presentation, Dylan Darling of the DEQ told KLCC that sampling and testing at over 60 residential yards showed dioxin levels that merited soil replacement at seven of them.

"We also now know about how far down we're going to need to go," he said. "In places, six inches to a foot, and in a few places, down to two feet."

Dylan said in the meantime, people living in the vicinity of the Baxter plant should take off their shoes upon entering their home, and other protocols meant to limit contact with potentially contaminated soil. He's encouraging people to visit [the DEQ information site on operations focused on J.H. Baxter](#).

Randy Nattis of [the EPA said that his agency will look at old chemical tanks at the site](#), as part of cleanup operations. Calling their 18-month partnership with DEQ a "force multiplier," in terms of getting access to the Baxter facility and conducting

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“If we can compel them to do it either via an order, or if they want to do it as a consent order,” said Nattis. “Or if they cannot, then EPA will seek cost recovery.”



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Lisa Dion, whose husband has been diagnosed with pediatric cancer, says she's concerned that his childhood spent growing up in the shadow of the J.H. Baxter plant may be the cause of his illness.

To that end, the J.H. Baxter site in Eugene could be officially designated a [Superfund site](#). That would provide millions of dollars to the EPA for cleanup. While one EPA presenter suggested it could happen before the fall of 2024, they admitted later to KLCC that the timeline for any of the process is uncertain.

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questions over solvency. The representatives at the presentation said they don't know the extent of their operations, just that there is a skeleton crew of two Baxter employees at the Eugene facility who work there on a Monday-Friday schedule. Security is done on a periodic basis.

Throughout the night, many in the audience expressed concern and frustration about the Baxter site.

Lisa Dion said her husband grew up near J.H. Baxter for over two decades. Just months after getting married last year, he developed a condition called pediatric cancer.

"He got suddenly very, very ill, last August and was subsequently diagnosed with this cancer," Dion told KLCC. "Because it's so rare, there's not a lot of treatment for it. And I can't help but not ignore his close proximity to JH Baxter while he was a child, playing in the yard, playing in the creek with the runoff. I don't think this is a coincidence that he has this rare cancer."

Dion said if there's a confirmed link to her husband's illness and J.H. Baxter's emissions, there's a strong chance she'd file suit.

Two class action suits are already filed against Baxter. The discovery portion for both ends September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Tags

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## Brian Bull

Brian Bull joined the KLCC News Team in June 2016. In his 25+ years as a public media journalist, he's worked at NPR, Twin Cities Public Television, South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Wisconsin Public Radio, and ideastream in Cleveland. His reporting has netted dozens of accolades, including four national Edward R. Murrow Awards (2 regional), the Ohio Associated Press Best Reporter Award

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