

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
FIELD SERVICES AND COMPLIANCE BUREAU  
FIELD OFFICE #2 - MASON CITY IOWA

DATE: July 26, 2021

TO: The Record

FROM: David Knoll

DK

SUBJECT: **Lehigh Cement Dust; Complaint ID# 29677**  
Lake Cona Toma, Mason City, IA, Cerro Gordo County

This memo is to provide context to the above referenced complaint. On July 2, 2021, this office received an anonymous complaint stating cement dust from Lehigh Cement accumulates on Lake Cona Toma at night, often on Sunday nights. The complainant reported the dust is typically only evident in the mornings as Lehigh must be releasing it during the night. It is the most evident on the south end of the lake and was present that morning.

I asked the complainant to describe the material on the lake they were observing. The complainant was defensive and stated it was definitely cement dust, which would be clear to anyone who observes it. The complainant stated everyone who lives on the lake knows and agrees it is cement dust from Lehigh. The complainant made reference to high property taxes they paid and the unfairness of not being able to enjoy the lake because a big company like Lehigh is allowed to pollute. I made a general comment that the DNR is well aware of this company and we have had multiple interactions with them regarding air quality requirements.

The complainant was adamant it needed to be investigated immediately as it has been occurring on and off for quite some time. I explained our procedure of assigning complaints and then investigating them in the order they are received. I stated it was unlikely anyone would be able to view the complaint that day, but we would do so within about a week. I suggested that since it is present now, a picture be taken and sent to my cell number, which I provided.

The complainant called back a few minutes later and explained they had spoken with two of their children, which were both attorneys, who advised the complainant to not send the DNR a picture. The complainant went on to say that they were told they do not work for the DNR and they should not have to do the DNR's job for them.

I then made a second attempt to gather more information on the lake deposits and asked if the complainant had also observed dust accumulating on the grass around the lake or on their deck or other areas of their property. Without answering my question, the complainant then accused me of not believing them. I explained that it may very well be cement dust, however, if there is a plume of dust settling over the area, it would generally be noticeable on other surfaces than just the lake, so I was trying to determine how widespread the problem was. The complainant then became more agitated, stating that they don't regularly look at the grass. They stated that they knew the DNR wouldn't do anything about this and that the DNR lets big industry get away with everything. More references were made to being a tax payer, former school teacher, etc. I assured the complainant that we would investigate the complaint and if a violation was found, we would hold the responsible party accountable. The complainant was not convinced and stated they would just continue calling anonymously each day they observed it as they felt DNR would not actually be doing anything about it. I again assured the complainant it would be investigated and we then ended the conversation.

DK