

Collapse seen 'imminent'

Call issued for residential evacuations as situation turns dire at leaking Piney Point wastewater pond.

BY ZACHARY T. SAMPSON AND JOSH FIALLO
Times Staff Writers

PALMETTO — Gov. Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in Manatee County on Saturday as officials fear an "imminent" collapse at the old Piney Point phosphate plant could release a rush of polluted water into the surrounding area — and then into Tampa Bay itself.

The situation grew more dire as crews attempted to shore up a breach in a wall around a 480-million

gallon wastewater reservoir that has been leaking for days. They used front-end loaders, excavators and dump trucks to pile dirt over the breach.

But at 10:30 a.m. Saturday the on-site engineers "deemed the situation to be escalating," said Manatee County Public Safety Director Jacob Saur. One containment wall shifted to the side, he said, signaling a structural collapse could happen at any time.

An "immense amount of water" could rush out in a sheet within

seconds or minutes if berms at the site crack wide open, said acting County Administrator Scott Hopes.

The flood could be several feet high and move through the immediate area, he said, before it would flow toward the bay, where environmental advocates fear it could pose consequential harm to the ecosystem.

"If you have not evacuated, please do so," he told residents of the surrounding area. "We in the See **EVACUATION, 14A**



JOHN PENDYGRAFT | Times

Personnel at the Manatee County Emergency Operations Center on Saturday scramble to address a potentially dangerous spill.

A TIMES INVESTIGATION



POISONED

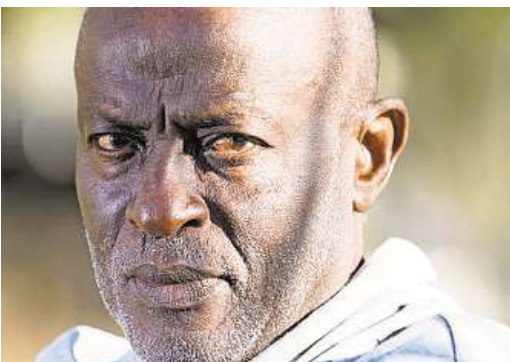
As conditions got worse for workers inside Gopher Resource, regulators have stayed away.



PART 2: THE FAILINGS



These men experienced a health emergency working at Gopher Resource in Tampa or have had the levels of lead rise inside their bodies. They have passed out, been burned by molten lead or suffered a stroke. Some were carted out on stretchers. Gopher has repeatedly violated federal safety rules, as nagging equipment failures plagued the company. So where have the federal regulators been? Missing in action.



Read the story by Rebecca Woolington, Corey G. Johnson and Eli Murray

SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE

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Future of the Trop

Parks, housing and history: How four Tropicana Field site pitches stack up ahead of St. Petersburg's public meetings this week.

BY JAY CRIDLIN AND JOSH SOLOMON
Times Staff Writers

ST. PETERSBURG — The public will have an opportunity to see and weigh in on the four proposals for the redevelopment of the 86-acre Tropicana Field site during sessions this week.

All of the proposals address the

requirements the city laid out in its solicitation for bids last year. All imagine homes, offices, tourism, education and retail coexisting. All leave space for a ballpark should the Tampa Bay Rays ultimately want to develop another stadium on the site, while making accommodations for parkland,

revitalizing Booker Creek, incorporating the site's racial history and providing for sustainability and arts and culture.

The differences are in the details, broken down below by each proposal. Mayor Rick Kriseman could make his final selection See **REDEVELOPMENT, 5A**

MEMORIAL HONORS 'FEARLESS FOUR'

James Dukes, Frank Gray, Rufus Lewis and Clarence Nathan are honored for efforts decades ago to help Black employees in Tampa's police force and government enjoy the same opportunities as white counterparts. **Local, 1B**

WRESTLING'S BIG EVENT COMES HOME

Tampa hosts WrestleMania for its first time April 10-11, but the area has long dominated the industry's biggest event. **Sports, 1C**

Sunny and pleasant

8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.
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58° 72° 76° 69°
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More, back page of Sports

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