

Letter Health Consultation

ACME STEEL COKE PLANT SITE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

MARCH 24, 2009

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation
Atlanta, Georgia 30333

Health Consultation: A Note of Explanation

An ATSDR health consultation is a verbal or written response from ATSDR to a specific request for information about health risks related to a specific site, a chemical release, or the presence of hazardous material. In order to prevent or mitigate exposures, a consultation may lead to specific actions, such as restricting use of or replacing water supplies; intensifying environmental sampling; restricting site access; or removing the contaminated material.

In addition, consultations may recommend additional public health actions, such as conducting health surveillance activities to evaluate exposure or trends in adverse health outcomes; conducting biological indicators of exposure studies to assess exposure; and providing health education for health care providers and community members. This concludes the health consultation process for this site, unless additional information is obtained by ATSDR which, in the Agency's opinion, indicates a need to revise or append the conclusions previously issued.

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LETTER HEALTH CONSULTATION

ACME STEEL COKE PLANT SITE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Prepared By:

Illinois Department of Public Health
Under a cooperative agreement with the
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry



Pat Quinn, Governor
Damon T. Arnold, M.D., M.P.H., Director

525-535 West Jefferson Street • Springfield, Illinois 62761-0001 • www.idph.state.il.us

#709150501H

February 17, 2009

Charisse Walcott
ATSDR - DHAC
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Mailstop F-58
Atlanta, GA 30333

Dear Charisse:

At the request of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) evaluated site-related information for and conducted a site visit of the ACME Steel Coke Plant to determine if site conditions have changed since the release of the August 24, 2007 health consultation.

Site Background

The ACME Steel Coke Plant site is on about 104 acres of land at 11236 South Torrence Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. Industrial and residential properties surround the site. The facility is bordered by Torrence Avenue on the east, a few residences to the south, a rail line and a wetland site known as "Interlake Property" to the west, and a vacant property to the north. The Calumet River is about 0.3 miles east of the site and Lake Michigan is about 3 miles east-northeast of the site.

This area was first industrialized in the late 1800s as a coke plant, which produced coke from coal, and operated on the site starting in 1905. The coke-making process involved the destructive distillation of coal in coke ovens without the presence of oxygen. Gaseous waste produced in the coking process included hydrogen, methane, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, ethane, hydrogen sulfide, ammonia and nitrogen, which were condensed, cooled, and compressed. Cleaned "coal gas" was recycled back into the coal ovens or sold as fuel. Liquid wastes included tar and crude light oil. Solid waste included coal dust, heavy hydrocarbons, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). The coke plant shut down operations in late 2001.

In 2007, IDPH prepared a health consultation for the site that was released by ATSDR. IDPH concluded that exposure to contaminated surface materials and sediments at the Acme Steel Coke Plant site posed a public health hazard. Trespassers and former workers also may have been exposed to contaminants on the site. In addition, remaining buildings at the site pose a physical hazard to trespassers. IDPH observed evidence of trespassing onto the site, so this exposure pathway was complete at that time. IDPH recommended that the:

- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) restrict access to the site by overseeing the installation and repair of a perimeter fence.
- Illinois EPA conduct further environmental sampling, including off-site sampling of adjacent residential properties, to determine if the site warrants further action, including listing on the National Priorities List.

Recent Activities

IDPH staff visited the site on January 8, 2009. The perimeter of the ACME Steel Coke Plant property is fenced and the gaps in the fence noted in the previous site visit have been repaired. No evidence of trespass was apparent. Vehicular access to the site was restricted by locked gates and concrete barriers. Heavy demolition equipment was present and workers from JABCO Industrial Services of Chicago Heights, Illinois were active at the site. Most of the buildings, which were previously considered a physical hazard and an attraction to trespassers, had been demolished. A worker explained that as the weather improved, the remaining on-site buildings would be removed.

The site remained covered with coal fines, cinders, and sparse vegetation. The home nearest the site, which was along the south boundary and near one of former gaps in the perimeter fence, was no longer occupied due to an apparent fire. The damaged home is no longer habitable and no evidence of recent human activity was present at that property.

Conclusion

Demolition activities at the site, the repair of the site perimeter fence, and the change in habitable status of the nearby home have reduced the potential for trespassers to be exposed to site-related contaminants. Surface contamination still exists on the site and there is the potential for contamination to migrate from the site via groundwater; however, there is no completed exposure pathway to site-related contamination at this time. Therefore, the site currently poses no public health hazard.

We continue to recommend that Illinois EPA conduct further environmental sampling of the site and surrounding area to determine if the site warrants further action, including listing on the National Priorities List. The site is on the Illinois EPA site evaluation work plan for the coming year. IDPH staff will visit the site annually for the next two years to determine whether site conditions change and will alter our conclusions based on our observations.

If you have further site-related questions, please contact me at 217-782-5830.

Sincerely,

Ken Runkle
Environmental Toxicologist

cc: Bruce Everetts, Illinois EPA



Date March 24, 2009

From Division of Health Assessment and Consultation, ATSDR

Subject Letter Health Consultation
Acme Steel Coke Plant Site

To Mark Johnson
Senior Regional Representative, ATSDR, Region V

Enclosed please find 1 copy of the March 24, 2009 Letter Health Consultation on the following site prepared by the Illinois Department of Public Health under cooperative agreement with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

ACME STEEL COKE PLANT SITE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

The Division of Health Assessment and Consultation requires copies of all letters used to transmit this document to the agencies, departments, or individuals on your distribution list. The copy letters will be placed into the administrative record for the site and serve as the official record of distribution for this health consultation.

Please address correspondence to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) Records Center, 1600 Clifton Road, NE (F09), Atlanta, Georgia 30333.

Freda Dumas
Manager, ATSDR Records Center

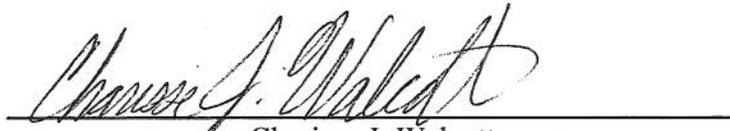
Enclosures

cc: W. Cibulas, Jr. R. Gillig C. Walcott L. Luker L. Daniel

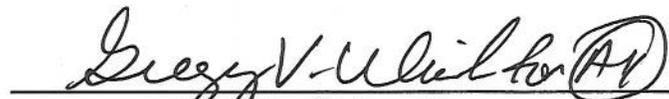
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Certification

This Acme Steel Coke Plant letter health consultation was prepared by the Illinois Department of Public Health under a cooperative agreement with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). It was completed in accordance with approved methodologies and procedures existing at the time the health consultation was initiated. Editorial review was completed by the Cooperative Agreement partner.


Charisse J. Walcott
Technical Project Officer, CAT, CAPEB, DHAC

The Division of Health Assessment and Consultation (DHAC), ATSDR, has reviewed this health consultation and concurs with its findings.


Alan Yarbrough
Team Lead, CAT, CAPEB, DHAC, ATSDR