

Red Panther Chemical Company Clarksdale, Mississippi

From 1949 until 1996, the Red Panther Chemical Company made pesticides at a manufacturing plant in Clarksdale, Mississippi. In 2005 and 2010, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) tested soil samples from yards in the 18th Street neighborhood and nearby areas to see if pesticides from the site had gotten into home yards. EPA found pesticides in some yards and asked the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to review its test results to see if exposure to these pesticides could harm people's health. ATSDR reviewed the test results and released a report in 2017. The report includes a description of what we did and recommendations we made to protect people's health. This is a summary of the report.



The Bottom Line

- Current exposure to four pesticides (toxaphene, heptachlor, heptachlor epoxide, and dieldrin) found in residential soil is not expected to harm people's health.
- There is not enough information to say if past exposure to the pesticides found in soil could have harmed people's health.
- ATSDR recommends additional sampling south and west of the site and on-site near the septic field to see if there are additional areas of contamination that people might be exposed to.

Will pesticides in the soil in my yard harm my health?

Soil test results showed that some pesticides have moved from the plant to some yards in homes in the 18th Street neighborhood and nearby areas. ATSDR reviewed the test results and found that the levels of toxaphene, heptachlor, heptachlor epoxide, and dieldrin in residential soil are low. Exposure to these pesticides is not expected to cause non-cancer health effects.

These pesticides can cause cancer in people if they are exposed to a high level for a long time. However, the risk is very low that people might develop cancer from the levels of pesticides found in these residential soil samples.

ATSDR works with medical groups that can talk with you about how exposure to pesticides in soil can affect your health. For more information about these medical groups, contact Leann Bing (see contact information on back of flier).

How can I be exposed to pesticides in soil?

Every day, and mostly by accident, most people will swallow a little soil along with any chemicals in the soil. Because they touch soil more often, gardeners might be exposed to more chemicals in soil. Children who play in soil and put dirt-covered toys and hands in their mouths might be exposed to chemicals in soil more than adults.

Fruits and vegetables grown in contaminated soil can take up pesticides, and pesticides can also stick to the outside of the fruits and vegetables. People can be exposed to these pesticides when they handle the fruits and vegetables, eat contaminated fruits and vegetables, or eat fruits and vegetables that are not washed well enough to get rid of the pesticides on the outside.

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Red Panther, the state of Mississippi, EPA, and others have cleaned up pesticides on the site and in drainage ditches east of the plant to lower pesticide exposure.

How can I reduce my family's exposure to pesticides in soil?

You can protect your health and your children's health by lowering the amount of soil you accidentally swallow. Follow these simple steps to lower the amount of soil you get into your body:

- Wipe your shoes on a doormat and take your shoes off when you come into your house.
- Damp mop floors and wipe down counters and furniture with a wet cloth often.
- Wash and peel all fruits, vegetables, and root crops raised on your property before cooking and eating them.
- Wash pets often.
- Wash children's toys often.
- Wash children's hands, feet and face after they have been playing outside.
- Do not eat food, chew gum, or smoke when working in the yard.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and gloves to keep soil off your skin. In the summer, wear light-weight clothing so you don't get too hot.

What medical tests can measure the levels of these pesticides in my body?

Special medical tests can measure levels of these four pesticides in your body. However, ATSDR does not recommend you get these tests. The tests cannot tell where the pesticides came from, or if the levels in your body can make you sick. Most doctors' offices do not do these tests. The tests need to be done at special laboratories that have the right equipment.

What will ATSDR do next?

- ATSDR addressed community concerns in the report and will continue to answer your health concerns at the site.
- ATSDR will continue to review the available test results and make recommendations to protect people's health from exposure to pesticides in soil at this site, as necessary.

Where can I learn more?

- Read the full report on the ATSDR website at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/HCPHA.asp?State=MS>
- Read the report at the Carnegie Public Library of Clarksdale, located at 114 Delta Avenue, Clarksdale MS.
- For more information about ATSDR's work at the Red Panther Chemical Site, phone Leann Bing at 404-562-1784, or send an email to her at KBing@cdc.gov.

