



The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (also known as the Superfund legislation). ATSDR's mission is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

www.atsdr.cdc.gov

1.888.42.ATSDR

May 2006

Environmental Health

Overview of the Kerr McGee Chemical Corporation Site in **Columbus, Mississippi**

Background

The Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation, (Kerr-McGee) was a wood-preserving plant in Columbus, Mississippi, that operated until 2003. The plant, which is located at 2300 14th Ave, covers about 90 acres of land and is surrounded by homes and industrial properties.

The company used creosote and creosote tar solution to make pressure treated wood products. They also used the pesticide, Pentachlorophenol, to treat wood at the site.

About creosote

One of the main contaminants found at the site is creosote, a mixture of several chemicals. Creosote

- Is a thick and oily liquid,
- Can easily be set on fire,
- Is usually amber-to-black in color,
- Is a common product used to preserve wood in the United States and,
- Is also used as a pesticide.

Although the Kerr-McGee plant is closed, can people still become exposed to creosote?

Yes, people can still be exposed to creosote through:

- Contact with contaminated soil at the bottom of streams that run from the plant and,
- Trespassing on the site and coming in contact with contaminated soil.

Does exposure to creosote cause health problems?

Some factors that may determine whether an exposure to creosote will cause health problems include the length of time that a person was exposed and the amount of chemical to which the person was exposed.

Below are some health problems a person may experience following creosote exposure.

Inhalation and/or direct skin contact may cause

- Irritation of the lungs.
- Blistering, peeling, or reddening of the skin
- Damage to the eyes
- Increased sensitivity to sunlight

Eating food or drinking water that contain large amounts of creosote may cause

- Burning in the mouth and throat
- Stomach pain
- Bad skin rashes
- Burning eyes
- Convulsions
- Kidney or liver problems
- Unconsciousness or death.

What is a Public Health Assessment (PHA)?

A PHA is a report produced by ATSDR that evaluates information about possible exposures to hazardous substances from a site and determines whether those exposures might cause harm to people.

As part of the PHA process for the Kerr-McGee site, ATSDR will review:

- - Environmental data,
- - Exposure data and,
- - Health effects data, including community health concerns.

How much time is needed to complete the Public Health Assessment?

Many factors affect the amount of time needed to complete a PHA. Some factors include the amount of time needed:

- - To gather and evaluate environmental data and other information to complete the document,
- - For ATSDR to review the document before its release,
- - To respond to public comments received during the 30 day public comment period.

After these steps are completed, ATSDR will release the final version of the Public Health Assessment.

Are there things that ATSDR will do for people living near the Kerr-McGee site?

ATSDR will:

- - Involve the community,
- - Review and assess environmental, health, and community information.
- - Contact the relevant federal, state, and local health and environmental agencies.
- - Make decisions and recommendations based on current available science to protect public health.

What can ATSDR do and not do?

ATSDR Can:

Collect additional data.
Refer public health issues or problems to other federal, state, or local governmental agencies.
Provide environmental health education for health care providers and the community.

ATSDR Can not:

Conduct large-scale site studies.
Force another agency to take action based on ATSDR's recommendations.
Provide medical treatment and health care services.

What types of recommendations does ATSDR make?

ATSDR can recommend: -

- - Additional sampling by other public health agencies, -
- - Ways in which the community can protect its own health,
- - Ways to reduce exposure to the contamination or contaminants.

Can I help?

You can help by:

- - Sharing information about the site with ATSDR.
- - Encouraging other community members to share information about the site, and participating in site activities,
- - Contacting us at 1-888-422-8737.

Whom should I contact if I have questions or want more information?

- - Please contact James Durant or Debra Joseph toll-free at 1-888-422-3737 weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM EST with your questions or concerns.
- - Please visit at the agency's website at www.atsdr.cdc.gov, to learn more about ATSDR.

Who do I contact about ATSDR's site activities?

If you have any questions or concerns, Please contact one of the following ATSDR site team members toll-free at 1-888-422-3737 weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM EST.

- - **James Durant**
Lead Environmental Health Scientist
- - **Debra Joseph**
Health Communications Specialist
- - **Carl Blair**
Regional Representative
- - **Sylvia Allen-Lewis**
Health Education Specialist

To learn more about ATSDR, please visit our website at www.atsdr.cdc.gov.