ATSDR

DCHi DIVISION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH INVESTIGATIONS

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

RESPOND

It starts with an invitation. When faced with a possible environmental threat, community organizations and environmental agencies can request DCHI's assistance investigating and responding to that threat. In 2016 we responded to over **520 requests** made across the country.

INVESTIGATE

DCHI's investigations can range from assessments of only a handful of people to 100,000 or more. Not everyone who might be exposed to a toxic substance will suffer the health effects caused by an exposure – but many do. Of the **nearly 950k individuals DCHI assessed** in 2016, more than **230k were exposed** to levels of contaminants that might be considered harmful.

PARTNER AND PROTECT

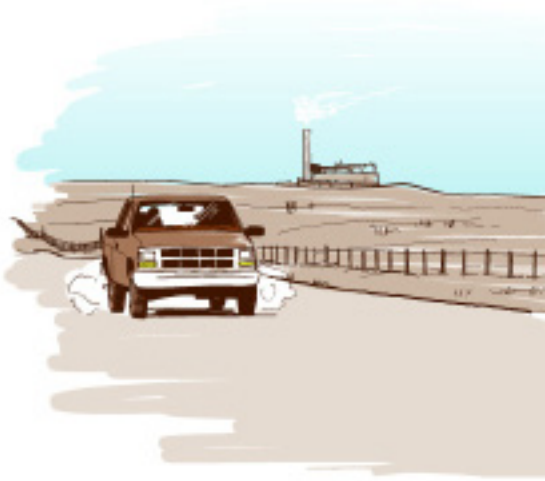
We know that all communities have different needs. That's why DCHI works closely with state and local organizations – as well as community members themselves – throughout our process. These partnerships help us create recommendations that are tailored to each community's specific needs and best able to safeguard the people living and working there. In 2016, DCHI worked with 130 communities, and **helped protect nearly 100,000 people** from harmful exposure.

PREVENT

But our work doesn't stop when an environmental threat is contained. In order to ensure the sustainability of prevention and protection efforts, DCHI helps empower communities to better protect themselves.

In 2016, DCHI provided critical information and health messages to **65,000 people** in communities nationwide.

NEARLY 950K PEOPLE SERVED IN 2016



USING STATE OF THE ART SCIENCE TO PROTECT AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

As a division of the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), we at the Division of Community Health Investigations (DCHI) work to protect Americans from the dangerous health effects of toxic substances in their environment. We respond to requests from federal, state, and local government environmental agencies and communities.

Every year, we work with communities around the country to find out if people in those communities are coming into contact with hazardous chemicals where they live, work, learn, and play. When dangerous conditions exist, we partner with the community, as well as other public health and regulatory agencies, to implement solutions that will prevent harmful exposures and protect public health.

In 2016, ATSDR responded to over **520 requests**, investigating the potential health risks of **nearly 950,000 people in 35 states and territories**. Our work resulted in actions that protected people from serious environmental threats – including exposure to dangerous levels of asbestos, lead, mercury, arsenic, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and other toxic substances.

130 COMMUNITIES
35 STATES
1 YEAR

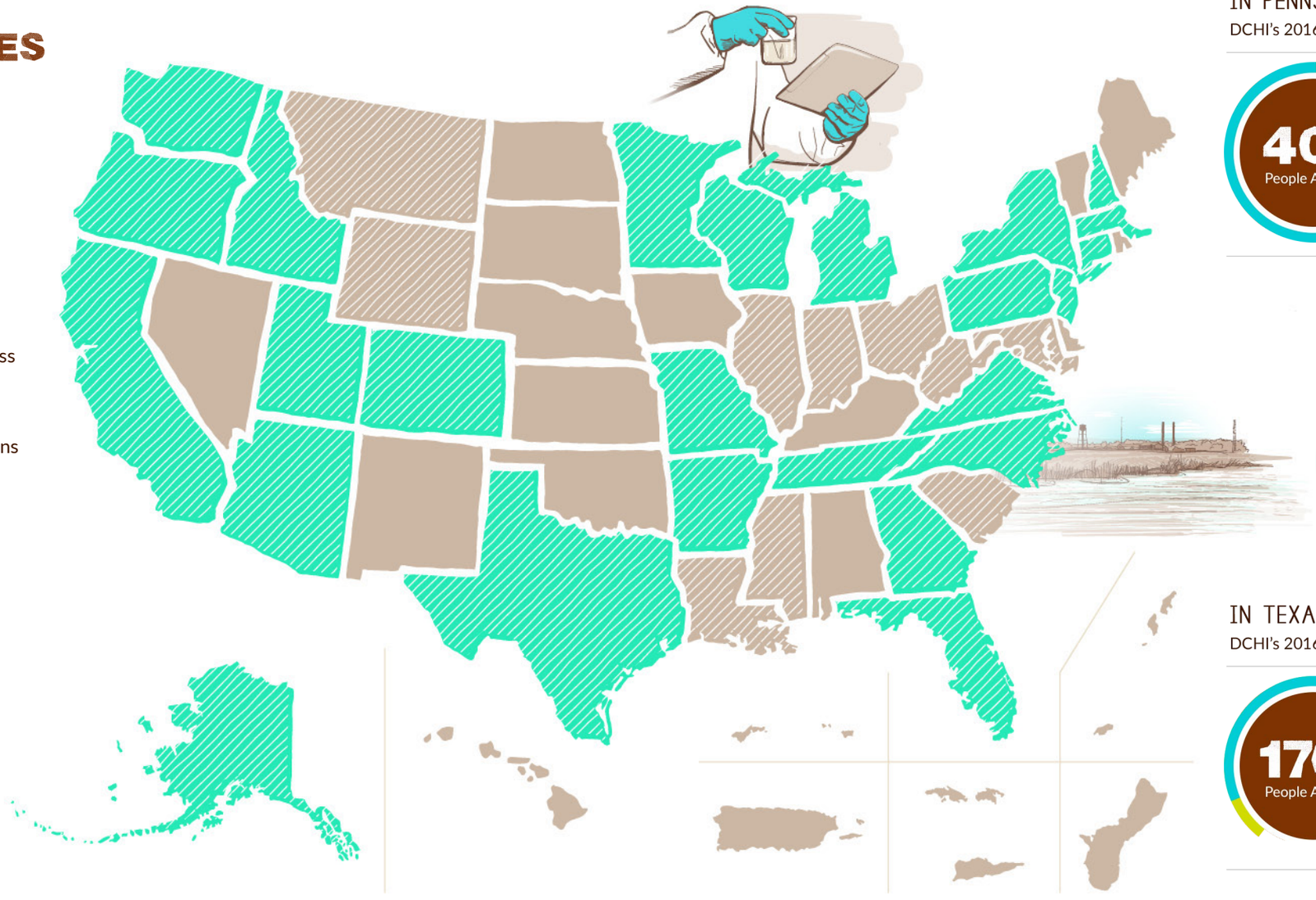
In 2016, DCHI's investigations took us from Florida to Alaska, coast to coast, and almost everywhere in between.

- States where DCHI conducted investigations
- States funded by DCHI to address exposures
- States not funded by DCHI and where no DCHI investigations occurred

FIND YOUR STATE PROFILE AT:

go.usa.gov/xNxY4

ATSDR



IN PENNSYLVANIA...

DCHI's 2016 investigations included...

40K People Assessed

40K People with Potential Exposures

37K People with Harmful Exposures

IN MISSOURI...

DCHI's 2016 investigations included...

6K People Assessed

4K People with Potential Exposures

2K People with Harmful Exposures

IN TEXAS...

DCHI's 2016 investigations included...

176K People Assessed

69K People with Potential Exposures

54K People with Harmful Exposures

CASE STUDY

SoilSHOP

Heavy metals and organic materials commonly contaminate urban soils.

Arsenic can effect almost every organ system in the body, including the brain; children are especially at risk.

Acute arsenic poisoning can cause vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, numbness and tingling of the extremities, muscle cramping, and, in extreme cases, death.

Long-term exposure to arsenic can cause cancer and may be associated with developmental effects, neurotoxicity, diabetes, pulmonary disease and cardiovascular disease.

DCHI HELPED AT-RISK URBAN GARDENS

In Philadelphia, New York City, and other major U.S. cities, a new hobby called urban gardening gathered momentum in apartments, residential homes, school, and other places in the hearts of the cities. The great idea of urban gardening, however, does come with risks. But with proper guidance, urban gardening provides a fun, healthy, and rewarding alternate to going to the grocery store.

SoilSHOP INITIATIVE

ATSDR worked with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and a group of artists called Futurefarmers to create an environmental art exhibit called “Soil Kitchen” (later expanded and renamed “soilSHOP” [Soil Screening, Health, Outreach, and Partnership].

ATSDR continues to participate in soilSHOPs to engage and inform residents about potential health hazards and give recommendations as to how residents can prevent exposures.

CASE STUDY

WAYCROSS

Trichloroethylene (TCE) is a common industrial solvent from hazardous waste sites that can contaminate groundwater, soil, air, and drinking water.

TCE contaminated water and air, acting as a suspected hepatotoxin and carcinogen when people drink contaminated water or inhale TCE-contaminated water vapor

Exposure to moderate levels of TCE may cause headaches, dizziness, sleepiness.

Exposure to high levels of TCE can cause skin rashes, change heart rhythms, cause liver, kidney, and nerve damage, coma and even death.

In the small town of Waycross, GA, residents voiced concern over their drinking water because of hazardous waste from two large industrial sites, an old rail yard and a former gas plant (est. 1916). Train brake degreasers containing TCE and tar by-products from the gas plant containing cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) had permeated the area. In 2015, panic heightened when four children in the community were diagnosed with a rare childhood cancer.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) arrived in Waycross in early 2016 to investigate the hazards. In partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH), ATSDR gathered data, evaluated exposures, and investigated health impact. At a public meeting, scientists answered questions and clarified residents' concerns. Contrary to common belief, TCE was not leaching into local aquifers or contaminating drinking water, but was present in the air and upper layer of soil. ATSDR oversaw cleanup of the area, using an "air stripper" to remove TCE evaporating from the ground. Throughout the investigation and cleanup, ATSDR kept the public informed and involved, ultimately bringing peace to a community in panic.

LEARN MORE

To learn more about how DCHI protects people from environmental hazards, visit the DCHI website.

go.usa.gov/xNxY4

800-CDC-INFO (232-4636) | TTY 888-232-6348

www.cdc.gov/cdc-info

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Division of Community Health Investigations