

Hormigas Ground Water Plume Site Caguas, Puerto Rico

Public Health Assessment Fact Sheet

March 2013

Purpose

This fact sheet provides information about chemicals found in the Hormigas public water system before it was shut down and what it means to people's health.

Background

The Hormigas public water system supplied water to the Hormigas Sector of Caguas, Puerto Rico. Most of the water from the Hormigas public water system came from the Cidra filtration plant, but some also came from two water supply wells located in the Hormigas Sector.

In 2006, the Puerto Rico Aqueduct Sewer Authority (PRASA) found that one of the Hormigas water supply wells was contaminated with certain chemicals. The same chemicals were found again in 2009 when the well was sampled by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. PRASA closed the Hormigas water system and disconnected the wells in February 2009. The people now receive water only from the Cidra filtration plant, which is tested regularly and meets water quality standards.

In April 2011, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and other agencies including the Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDOH), the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources (PRDNR), PRASA, and EPA visited the area to gather information about the site and talked to people about their concerns.

ATSDR prepared a Public Health Assessment to determine if health effects would be expected as a result of drinking water from the Hormigas Water System before it was closed.

The source of the chemicals in the water is not known. EPA is working to identify the source of the chemicals that contaminated the water.

ATSDR's Findings

- The chemicals found were perchloroethylene (PCE), trichloroethylene (TCE) and cis-1,2-dichloroethene (cis-1,2-DCE).
- The chemicals are manmade and used as solvents (chemicals that are used to dissolve or clean things).
- The amounts of chemicals people drank from the Hormigas water supply wells were below levels of health concern.
- Residents of the Hormigas sector now get all of their water from the Cidra filtration plant, which is tested regularly and meets water quality standards.

ATSDR's Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Public Health Assessment, ATSDR concludes:

- The residents of the Hormigas Sector are not currently exposed to chemicals in the water supply wells because the wells were closed in 2009.
- Harmful effects are not expected in people who used the Hormigas System before the wells were closed in 2009 because the contaminants were below levels of health concern.

ATSDR recommends that other agencies take action to protect people from exposure:

- PRASA should continue frequent monitoring of the water from the Cidra filtration plant to ensure that the public water supply meets water quality standards and is safe.

Public Comments Period

ATSDR will accept public comments on the report until **April 19, 2013**. Comments must be made in writing. ATSDR's response to comments will be included in an appendix in the final Public Health Assessment report.

Send comments to: ATSDRRecordsCenter@cdc.gov, or mail to:

ATSDR Records Center
Attn: Rolanda Morrison
Re: Hormigas Site Public Health Assessment
4770 Buford Highway, NE (MS F-09)
Atlanta, Georgia 30341

For more information or to view the report

- Contact Karen Scruton, Lead Environmental Health Scientist at 770-488-1325 or by email at kscruton@cdc.gov.
- Community members can also call 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636). The caller should state the request is for information about the Hormigas Sector site in Puerto Rico.
- The report is posted on ATSDR's Web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hac/pha/publiccomments.asp>
- A copy of the report is also available at the:
Centro de Gobierno Municipal
Calle Padial Esquina Ave. José Mercado
Oficina de Asuntos Ambientales- Piso 1
Caguas, Puerto Rico