

# Kerr-McGee/Tronox, Columbus, Mississippi

## Drinking Water Exposure Investigation

September 2008  
Environmental  
Health



### Background

At the request of the community, in April 2008, ATSDR sampled drinking (tap) water in homes near the closed Kerr-McGee Chemical Corporation wood-treatment plant.

### What did ATSDR do?

ATSDR collected 16 samples:

- ten from homes where people reported their tap water had frequent discoloration, putrid odors, and a foul taste;
- four from homes some distance away from the closed plant; and
- two from the city's water treatment plants.

ATSDR also tested for chemicals typically found at wood-treatment plants:

- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs),
- Phenols (including pentachlorophenol (PCP)) and total petroleum hydrocarbons (TPH), and
- Select samples of dioxins and furans.

Because people reported problems with their water, we also tested the water for qualities and ingredients that could discolor it or give it a bad odor or taste, such as:

- turbidity (cloudiness),
- pH,
- iron,
- manganese, sulfide, and
- chlorine (residual).

## *What did ATSDR find?*

### ATSDR found:

- No evidence that chemicals used at the former wood-treatment plant have entered the city's drinking water system.
- The iron levels in the water system could periodically give the water a metallic taste and may at times even approach staining levels. But the detected iron levels do not exceed regulatory guidelines. Thus, the tested water would not cause harm to anyone who drinks, cooks with it, or uses it for other domestic purposes.

## *What were ATSDR recommendations?*

### ATSDR recommends:

- Anyone who has been diagnosed with high levels of iron in their water should consider using bottled water for drinking or should filter water to remove the iron.
- Using non-chlorine bleach when washing clothes to reduce iron spotting.
- Installing a whole-house iron filter to remove the metallic taste from water.

## *How do I get more information?*

### For more information on:

- The Kerr-McGee drinking water EI, please contact Diane Jackson at (770) 488-0759, or
- Contact ATSDR at 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636), or
- Visit the ATSDR website at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>.

**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.**