



ATSDR
AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES
AND DISEASE REGISTRY

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.

September 2008

Environmental Health

Kerr McGee Chemical Corporation/Tronox Columbus, MS Public Health Assessment Soil, Sediment and Surface Water

Purpose

The purpose of this fact sheet is to present the findings of our evaluation of chemicals in soil, sediment and surface water near the Kerr-McGee facility. The purpose of the evaluation was to determine if exposure to these chemicals would result in adverse health effects.

Background

The Kerr-McGee (now Tronox) Corporation operated as a wood-treatment plant in Columbus, Mississippi, until 2003. The facility, which is now closed, covered about 90 acres and was 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.

How did ATSDR become involved at this site?

The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) received a request from members of the community to find out if people living near the Kerr-McGee facility were exposed to chemicals at levels that could cause health problems.

Did people come in contact with chemicals from the facility?

ATSDR found that people may have come into contact with chemicals in drainage ditches near the Kerr McGee facility.

Children who played in the ditches or adults who contacted contaminated ditch sediment may have:

- accidentally ingested small amounts of chemicals that got onto their hands; or
- absorbed some chemicals through their skin if contaminated sediment or surface water got onto their skin

What chemicals did ATSDR find in the sediments and soil?

ATSDR found:

- Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs)
- Pentachlorophenol (Penta)
- Dioxins
- Arsenic

Please see the Kerr-McGee PHA document or visit ATSDR's website at www.atsdr.cdc.gov for more information on these chemicals.

Were there other potential exposures that were ruled out?

Yes, the following were identified as eliminated exposure pathways, so no one was exposed by:

- Drinking Water (measured at the residential faucet/tap)
- Groundwater / Private Wells (residential or industrial wells)
- Biota – Fish (caught in nearby creeks)

Will exposure to these chemicals make me sick?

Maybe. Whether a person exposed to these chemicals will get sick depends on several things, including:

- the amount of chemical you were exposed to
- the length of time of you were exposed
- the number of times you were exposed.

In the past, children who frequently played in the ditches may experience rashes or other dermatological effects.

In the past, children who frequently played in the ditches may also experience reproductive or developmental effects.

In the past, children who frequently played in the ditches may also be at increased risk for cancer.

What actions have been taken to reduce contamination in my neighborhood?

In 2004, Kerr-McGee cleaned up contaminated sediment in the drainage ditches bordering the facility.

Kerr-McGee cleaned up contaminated soils at the facility to prevent further contamination of the ditches.

What does ATSDR recommend for residents?

ATSDR recommends that:

- If residents notice creosote material in their yards, they should not touch it. They should contact the appropriate local agency or call Russ McClean of EPA at 1-800-241-1754.
- Residents should not burn creosote-treated wood in their stoves or fireplaces.
- If you believe you have come into contact with creosote, and you are concerned about your health or the health of your child, you should contact your physician .

What does ATSDR recommend for other involved parties?

ATSDR recommends that:

- Kerr-McGee or other environmental agencies should remove contamination that may expose people to hazardous chemicals.
- Additional testing should be done in yards or other areas near ditches or that are prone to flooding.

How do I get more information on sampling and clean up?

For more information on sampling and clean-up at the Kerr-McGee facility:

- Please call Russ McLean, EPA Project Officer, at 1-800-241-1754.

To learn more about the EPA, visit their website at www.epa.gov.

How do I get more information on the PHA?

For more information on the Kerr-McGee public health assessment:

- Please call Teresa Foster at 770-488-0752 or toll-free 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636).