

Creosote Health Effects

Former Kerr McGee (Tronox) Facility

November 2006

Environmental Health



Overview

This fact sheet was developed by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), as requested by community members potentially affected by the Former Kerr McGee (Tronox) Facility.

It talks about:

- What creosote is,
- What happens when creosote enters the environment,
- Health effects associated with creosote, and
- How people can avoid or minimize contact with it.

The name “creosote”

Creosote is a name used for several different products. In this fact sheet, the name creosote will be used specifically to talk about coal tar creosote since this is the type of creosote normally used in wood preserving processes.

What creosote is

- Creosote is a mixture of hundreds of chemicals. A mixture is substances, like water and salt, staying together by physical forces. The major chemicals in coal tar creosote are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), phenol, and creosols.
- Creosote is a thick and oily liquid. It is easily set on fire. Its color is usually amber to black.
- Creosote is the most common product utilized to preserve wood in United States.
- Creosote is also a pesticide. A pesticide is a substance that kills pests.
- People need to be trained and certified to use creosote to preserve wood and as a pesticide.

