

ATSDR Public Health Investment

Alaska

CDC/ATSDR support helps Alaska reduce exposures to hazardous substances in the environment

Alaska is one of 25 states using ATSDR cooperative agreement funds to build their capacity to assess and respond to site-specific issues involving human exposure to hazardous substances in the environment.

Public Health in Action

Return to tradition — For 14 years, members of the Yakutat Tlingit Tribe, fearing health effects from dioxin exposure, stopped harvesting clam and crab for food in the Ankau Saltchuk and closed their native culture camp. Alaska's Environmental Public Health Program (EHPH) partnered with ATSDR to assess cancer and noncancer risks from eating dioxin-contaminated seafood, conduct risk communication and health education in the community, and distribute a survey to evaluate the initiative's effectiveness. The initiative proved successful when a year later, the majority of the community resumed harvesting seafood.

Key projects

- **Eielson Air Force Base and Moose Creek** — Perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contaminated drinking water wells in the vicinity of the Moose Creek residential area and Eielson Air Force Base. EPHP and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) are informing the public about potential health risks from consuming water with PFAS contamination. The Air Force is providing alternative drinking water to those affected. ATSDR is providing EPHP with health information and guidance on PFAS.
- **Fairbanks Regional Fire Training Center** — Drinking water wells at homes near the Regional Fire Training Center in Fairbanks have been contaminated with PFAS. The EPHP, ADEC, and City of Fairbanks have been telling area residents about the health risks and providing alternate sources of drinking water. ATSDR is providing EPHP with health information and guidance on PFAS.
- **Aurora Energy Coal Power Plant** — In response to a citizen petition, the EPHP has conducted two health assessments for the Aurora Energy Coal Power Plant, located near the Chena River in downtown Fairbanks. ATSDR provided science support to EPHP in assessing health risks from lead exposure in soil and from exposure to power plant emissions. EPHP provided health education to the community and coordinated with the local public health center for free blood lead testing.

State Priorities

- **Traditional Food Safety** — Evaluate the potential health effects of environmental contaminants in traditional foods and provide recommendations to guide consumers' dietary choices.
- **Lead and mercury biomonitoring programs** — Increase lead screening rates in Alaskan children and increase hair sampling in women of childbearing age to monitor potential mercury exposure and improve exposure prevention. Almost 2,000 people, including 1,243 women of childbearing age (see graph) have participated in the free Hair Mercury Biomonitoring Program since it began in 2001.
- **Safe Drinking Water** — Evaluate contaminant concentrations in drinking water containing PFAS and other chemicals such as arsenic or tetrachloroethylene; provide affected populations with health education about potential harmful health effects and recommend ways to prevent exposure.

Alaska

Award amount:

\$404,467 per year

Term: 3 years

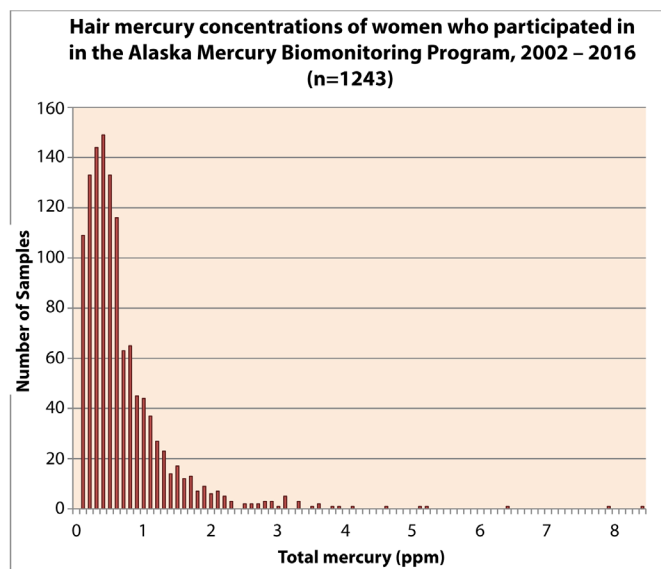
Grantee since: 1990s

About ATSDR

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), based in Atlanta, Georgia along with 10 regional offices, is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ATSDR serves the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and diseases related to toxic substances.

Did You Know?

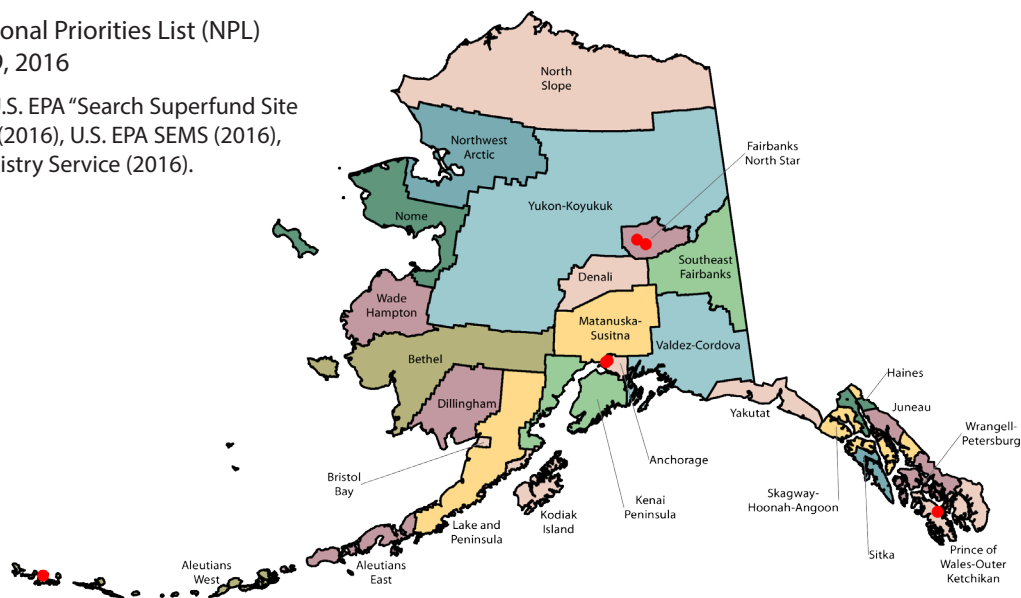
- Alaska's health challenges often stem from its vast land area, isolated villages, lack of health infrastructure (in-home piped water and septic systems), poverty level, and reliance on subsistence food sources. Partnerships among private, tribal, local, state, and federal agencies can help overcome these challenges.
- Naturally occurring mercury, old mine sites, and current use of mercury to extract gold can contaminate the environment and present potential health risks to local populations relying on fish for food.
- The most common source of non-occupational lead exposure in adults is shooting at indoor firing ranges. Children can be exposed by parents who shoot at indoor firing ranges or by eating game meat killed with lead shot.



Alaska Site on Final National Priorities List (NPL)

- Sites on Final National Priorities List (NPL) as of September 9, 2016

Data sources: Esri, U.S. EPA "Search Superfund Site Information" query (2016), U.S. EPA SEMS (2016), U.S. EPA Facility Registry Service (2016).



Learn more

Follow these links to learn more about programs protecting public health in Alaska:

ATSDR — <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>

Division of Community Health Investigations (DCHI) — <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hac/index.html>

ATSDR Public Health Assessments and Consultations for Alaska — <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/hac/pha/HCPHA.asp?State=AK>

The Environmental Public Health Program, State of Alaska — <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/eph/Pages/default.aspx>

ATSDR – The most trusted Agency protecting American communities from environmental health threats through application of state of the art science.

Last updated 10/01/2017