

Spring Valley

Spring Valley, Washington, D.C. Community Newsletter – March 2003

Newsletter No. 3

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is pleased to provide the Spring Valley community with updates regarding our activities. During the past 6 months, ATSDR, in conjunction with the District of Columbia (D.C.) Department of Health, completed its Spring Valley Phase II Exposure Investigation (EI). In response to requests from the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel and others to sample selected residential areas during the summer months — and as a follow-up to the March 2002 Phase I EI — this EI was conducted from July through November 2002. The purpose of the EI was to evaluate whether exposure to — that is, contact with — residential surface soils previously identified as having elevated levels of arsenic poses a public health risk, especially during times of increased outdoor activities. Samples of urine were collected from persons living in houses on or next to the areas with elevated arsenic levels to determine if arsenic exposure was occurring. Overall, urine arsenic testing shows low levels of arsenic exposure in the population tested. These levels would not be expected to cause health problems. In addition, please visit ATSDR's Spring Valley Web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/springvalley. As always, ATSDR values and welcomes your opinions and comments regarding what you would like to see included in future newsletters.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Williams, PE, DEE
Assistant Surgeon General
Director, Division of Health Assessment and Consultation

Who participated in the summer 2002 Exposure Investigation?

A total of 40 persons (34 adults and 6 children) participated. Testing was offered to those persons who met at least one of these criteria:

- Participated in the March 2002 (Phase I) EI. Nine of the thirteen households from the Phase I EI participated in the summer 2002 (Phase II) EI.
- Were living on or next to the property where soil removals were occurring. Six households had homes next to the property where soil was being removed by the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Had yards with the highest levels of arsenic from a single sample.

What did investigators analyze for in the Phase II (summer 2002) EI?

- Urine samples were analyzed for arsenic as an indicator of exposure to this substance within the preceding few days.
- Most of the urine samples were analyzed for either total arsenic (which could come from all sources — food, water, air, soil, and dust) or inorganic arsenic (which might be coming from contaminated soil and dust).

What were the final results of the summer 2002 EI?

- Three persons had mild elevations (>10 but <30 $\mu\text{g/L}$) of inorganic arsenic in their urine. However, health effects are not expected in these participants.
- Most participants (92%) had urine arsenic values less than 10 $\mu\text{g/L}$, indicating normal levels.

What recommendations were made regarding these results?

- Participants whose urinary arsenic levels were mildly elevated should have follow-up urinalyses for arsenic.
- Participants should discuss their results with their personal health care providers.

How were the Phase II Exposure Investigation findings shared with the community and other groups?

On Tuesday, December 10, 2002, ATSDR staff held a community meeting with only those persons who had participated in the Spring Valley Phase II Exposure Investigation. The purpose of the meeting was to answer questions and address concerns pertaining to the participants' individual results.

In addition, in another meeting held with the community, the results of the agency's Phase II EI were presented to the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) members.

On Monday, February 3, 2003, the Phase II EI results were shared with the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel.

What's next?

ATSDR will release a report on the Phase II EI results by the end of March 2003.

In addition, ATSDR is drafting a health consultation in which we will review site data and provide a public health perspective on environmental and health data. This consultation will include a review of the scientific literature to see if existing data suggest a plausible relationship between site contaminants and illnesses that were reported by residents to the D.C. Department of Health. We anticipate that this consultation will be shared with the community in the spring of 2003.

For additional information, please contact any of the following ATSDR representatives.

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