

Neighborhood Update

January 2015

Koppers Hazardous Waste Site



Indoor Dioxin Levels Return to Background after Soil Cleanup

The Florida Department of Health (FDOH) works to protect health. The U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provides us with funding to help people who live near hazardous waste sites learn how to stay safe. If we find a health threat, we let those who live near a site know about it right away.

In 2014, Beazer East (the party responsible for Koppers) cleaned up chlorinated dioxins in the outdoor soil of 100 nearby houses as required by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The cleanup is now complete.

After the soil cleanup, a Protect Gainesville's Citizens (PGC) research project found a decrease in the levels of chlorinated dioxins in indoor dust. This decrease showed that the soil (dirt) tracked in from outdoors contributed to chlorinated dioxins in indoor dust.

In July 2014, PGC tested dust in five houses, eight weeks after Beazer East had replaced polluted soil with clean soil. Before the soil cleanup, the indoor dust chlorinated dioxin levels averaged roughly 39 parts per trillion (ppt), as compared to the average background level of 25 ppt.

PGC found that after the soil cleanup, with just normal household cleaning, the average indoor dust chlorinated dioxin level in four of the houses dropped to background. The fifth house had higher chlorinated dioxin levels to begin with that did not decrease after the cleanup. PGC attributed this to a potential source of chlorinated dioxins inside this house (a wood-burning stove). An indoor dioxin source would explain the difference in dioxin levels as well as different kinds of chlorinated dioxins found in this house compared to dust from the other near-site houses and contaminated soil.

PGC also tested the dust in two houses for brominated dioxins and found the concentrations dropped significantly since EPA tested in 2012.

The PGC research project addressed community health concerns about dioxins in house dust. Funds came from EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grant program (EJSG). For more information, contact EJSG Project Manager Daphne Wilson (404-562-9098). For technical questions, contact PGC technical advisor Dr. Pat Cline (352-234-3732).

See the PGC report on dioxins in indoor dust at:
www.alachuacounty.us/Depts/EPD/Pollution/Pages/CabotKoppersSuperfund.aspx

In 2011, a consultant tested the indoor dust of many nearby houses using the "CALUX" screening test. The CALUX test measures chlorinated dioxins, brominated dioxins, and hundreds of other "dioxin-like" chemicals. Over 60% of those houses had "dioxin-like" chemicals above 100 ppt, even though the EPA dust testing showed that no houses had Koppers-related chlorinated dioxins above 100 ppt. Studies have shown "dioxin-like" chemicals come from flame retardants used in foam furniture and electronics/electrical cables. These sources likely contribute to higher levels of "dioxin-like" chemicals found using the CALUX test.

In a series of reports, FDOH determined that although the chlorinated dioxin levels in both outdoor soil and indoor dust were higher near Koppers, non-cancer illness was unlikely and the increased cancer risk was low.

Residential Soil Cleanup Progress

Soil replacement is now complete at all residential properties.

See all the Florida Department of Health reports written about the Koppers site at:
<http://alachua.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/environmental-health/koppers/koppers-reports.html>
Or call (toll-free) for a copy: 877-798-2772
Or request by email: PHToxicology@FLHealth.gov

Future Health Plans

Florida DOH will:

- Solicit public comment on our draft report on the potential health threat from vapor intrusion into buildings over the former Cabot Carbon portion of the site.
- Keep people up-to-date on any new health findings.

Koppers Site

The Koppers/Cabot Carbon site is at 200 N.W. 23rd Avenue west of North Main Street. From 1916 to 2009, the site owners treated wood to stop rot. Over the years, waste leaked into soil and groundwater. In 1984, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) added the site to the National Priorities List (NPL). People who live west of the site have health concerns.

Since 1989, the Florida DOH and ATSDR have:

- Advised the posting of warning signs where needed.
- Asked EPA to do more testing on- and off-site.
- Found soil on the site is a likely health risk.
- Reviewed tests of soil, groundwater, and creek beds.
- Warned people to keep off the site.
- Written 10 reports in response to health concerns.
- Advised parents to keep children from playing in the north-south city easement next to the site between NW 26th and 29th Avenues.

For More Details

About health or any Florida DOH health report about Koppers:

- Randy Merchant, Florida DOH Headquarters (toll-free): 1-877-798-2772
- Anthony Dennis, Florida DOH in Alachua County: 352-334-7930

About cleanup of the site:

- Scott Miller, U.S. EPA: 404-562-9120

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