

Update for Stephen Foster Neighborhood

January 2012

Koppers Hazardous Waste Site

Alachua CHD and Florida DOH announce final version of health report on the most recent residential soil testing now available and EPA beginning work on indoor dust testing in nearby homes

About the Health Agencies

The central office of the Florida Department of Health (DOH), the DOH Alachua County Health Department (ACHD), and the US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) work jointly to protect the public's health. We give people facts from scientific studies on toxic chemicals to help them learn how to stay safe. If we find a health threat, we make sure people who live nearby know about it right away.

About the Koppers Site

The Koppers hazardous waste site is in Gainesville, near where Northwest 23rd Avenue and North Main Street meet. Since 1916, Koppers site owners used chemicals to treat wood to stop decay. Past waste disposal caused chemicals to get into the soil and groundwater.

In 1984, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) added the Cabot-Koppers site to the National Priorities List (NPL). Since 1989, Florida DOH and ATSDR have:

- Reviewed environmental data
- Found the site is a likely health risk
- Advised the responsible party to post warning signs
- Asked EPA to do more testing on and offsite
- Advised people to keep off the site
- Advised parents to keep children off the city easements west of the site where chemical levels are high in the soil

People living west of Koppers in the Stephen Foster neighborhood worry that chemicals from the site in the soil, indoor dust in their homes, or in creek sediments might affect their health.

Findings in Final Florida DOH Report on Most Recent Soil Tests

Common hand-to-mouth actions (like eating and smoking) that occur every day lead to children and adult residents swallowing very small amounts of soil by chance. This is called "incidental ingestion." Chemicals in the soil may then get into the body.

Florida DOH and ATSDR conclude that, based on the most recent surface soil tests of neighborhood yards and other nearby areas, swallowing very small amounts of dioxins in surface soil is not likely to cause non-cancer illness. In theory, however, swallowing this soil over a lifetime puts people at a "low to very low" increased risk of cancer.

Florida DOH and ATSDR cannot, however, conclude if exposure to dust inside Stephen Foster homes could harm people's health. The report found a need for dust testing.

EPA Beginning Work on Indoor Dust Testing in Nearby Homes

In July 2011, Florida DOH formed a workgroup. County, state, and federal agency staff, local neighborhood leaders and a consultant for the party cleaning up the site were all part of the group. The workgroup offered a plan to EPA to test nearby homes for dioxins in indoor dust. The plan also gave EPA guidelines on how to judge the test results.

The EPA has begun seeking homeowners who would like them to test their homes for dioxins in indoor dust. EPA is starting to get consent to allow testing 15 homes near the site. They will test 15 other homes further from the site to see what background levels of dioxins are normal for the Gainesville area.

Such testing will help answer questions about dioxin levels that may exist in homes of people living near the site have. Florida DOH will review test results. DOH will also look at people's health concerns for dioxin in indoor dust. Another health report will result. EPA will work with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on ways to lessen any health risk found. EPA is now working on the best way to test the dust.

There are no federal or state standards for dioxins in indoor dust. The workgroup's plan does not cover how to clean dioxins from indoor dust. It also does not give clean-up levels for dioxins in dust. EPA, with help from the Florida DEP, will choose the best way to cleanup homes that may need it.

Future Health Plans

- Early this year, Florida DOH plans to release a second report concerning cancer (as an addendum to its June 2011 cancer review report). DOH will further review cancer records for the census tract around the Koppers site. The report will use data for 2001-2008 with details from the 2010 census data.
- Florida DOH also plans to inform people living near the site on any other new findings.

Other Site Activities

- EPA is planning more surface soil tests in the Stephen Foster neighborhood in January.
- EPA is in the process of testing the dust of nearby homes for dioxins.

For More Details

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About cleanup of the site or dust testing:

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***See all eight of the Koppers health reports online at:
www.myfloridaeh.com/medicine/superfund/pha.htm
Or to get hard copies, call us toll-free at 877-798-2772
Or email us at HSEM@doh.state.fl.us
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