

MDCH Response to Public Comments and Questions Received during the May 15, 2013 Community Meeting in Lake Linden, Michigan, but Not Pertaining to the Stampsands Inhalation and Recreational Exposure Public Health Assessments Discussed at the Meeting

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) compiled the comments and questions received at the May 15, 2013 community meeting in Lake Linden, Michigan. Questions and comments received that did not specifically apply to either public health assessment document are addressed here. MDCH conferred with other agencies and officials to obtain accurate information and are including their responses here as a courtesy.

Questions and comments pertaining to the stampsands inhalation report are addressed in an appendix of that document.

Questions and comments pertaining to the recreational exposure document are addressed in an appendix of that report.

What is the current status of the advisory council (the PAC)?

The PAC (Public Action Council) was originally formed under the Areas of Concern (AOC) program for Torch Lake as a Public Advisory Committee. They are now a 501c3 and address both Superfund and AOC issues. According to PAC members present at the May 15, 2013 meeting, the group started with about 30 members when it first formed. There are currently 18 members. The membership determined that they did not need to meet on a regular basis and asked members of the Technical Committee (TC) to represent the PAC at large. The current TC is comprised of four regularly active members. The PAC has worked with U.S. EPA's Emergency Response group, as well as the Superfund Remedial staff. The PAC reported that local well drillers have assured them that no wells are screened in the stampsands and that each new well's water is sampled by the local health department for water quality parameters. (Note that water from each new well is only required to be tested for bacteria, although other testing is recommended [<http://www.wupdhd.org/environmental-health/water-supply-protection-well-program/uranium-and-fluoride-advisory/>].) At the May 15, 2013 meeting the PAC reported, some of their concerns about the restrictive covenants in place for Calumet Lake. For regulatory issues such as these, they would need to discuss their concerns with MDEQ and U.S. EPA.

Is there an inventory of all the areas in the western Upper Peninsula that need or are undergoing remediation?

According to the MDEQ Remediation and Redevelopment Division chief, there is no publicly-available list. Also, some facilities self-implement remedial activities without reporting them to MDEQ.

Do we also have to worry about the iron tailings in the rest of the Upper Peninsula?

Iron tailings could have elevated chemical levels. Samples would have to be collected and analyzed to know for sure.

MDCH has evaluated fish contamination associated with iron mines located near certain waterbodies: selenium contamination in Goose Lake in Marquette County (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Goose_Lake_Selenium_LHC- FINAL-3-10-

[2011_369145_7.pdf](#)) and mercury contamination in Deer Lake in Marquette County (http://www.michigan.gov/mdch/0,4612,7-132-54783_54784_54785_58671-266093--,00.html). MDCH did not evaluate other exposure pathways at these sites.

Does the WUPHD have resources to facilitate well testing, should a private property owner have limited resources? How about if there are dug wells that need to be capped?

According to WUPHD, no grants are available for property owners, nor can WUPHD fund analysis. However some wells can be capped at minimal cost. If contaminants are found during groundwater monitoring or drinking water well testing, WUPHD will work with MDEQ to address the situation.

Why do people have higher incidences of cancer (a cancer cluster)?

The perception of increased rates of cancer in the area is *not* supported by the data. The WUPHD briefly discussed its 2012 Regional Community Health Assessment Report (<http://www.wuphd.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/2012-WUP-Health-Assessment-Community-Report.pdf>, see page 5) at the May 15, 2013 meeting. Based on information described in that report, people living in this area do *not* have a higher incidence of cancer.

Who is ATSDR?

ATSDR is the federal public health agency responsible for evaluating the effects of exposure to chemical or physical hazards on human health. The agency was created when the Superfund legislation passed in the 1980s. ATSDR's mission is to:

- serve the public by using the best available science,
- take responsive public health actions, and
- provide information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to chemical and physical hazards.

To learn more about ATSDR, visit <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/>.

Once the public health assessment documents are finalized, what will they be used for by ATSDR? How will they be used? For action planning?

A public health assessment (PHA) reviews information about environmental hazards, both physical and chemical, to evaluate any impact on public health. If current or future exposure to a hazard exists, MDCH determines whether that exposure is harmful. MDCH makes recommendations on how exposure to a hazard can be stopped or reduced. These recommendations can be used for action planning by regulatory agencies, responsible parties, and communities. See MDCH's factsheet for more information on Public Health Assessments: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdch/Public_Health_Assessment_Fact_Sheet_387384_7.pdf.

The Keweenaw Bay Indian Community (KBIC) should be recognized as a concerned stakeholder for the Torch Lake area.

Comment noted. MDCH will keep KBIC apprised of public health matters for the area and has forwarded KBIC's request to MDEQ and EPA.

Asbestos has been found in the Tamarack City stamp mill ruins that are next to the playground (6th Street and Tamarack Street). Could it affect the playground area?

MDEQ found friable asbestos on the ground among the ruins in May 2013 and requested assistance from EPA's Emergency Removal Branch. The EPA conducted a site visit in July and is preparing to conduct more sampling in September 2013 to help define the extent of asbestos and take the next steps. The area where the asbestos has been found is separated from the playground by a vacant area that is posted with No Trespassing signs and is at a different elevation not easily accessed from the playground.

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