

Health Consultation:
“St. Clair Shores PCBs – Residential Soils
St. Clair Shores, Macomb County, Michigan”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2001, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were discovered in sediments of two connected canals (Lange and Revere) slated to be dredged in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removed the contamination in the canals and the sewer system that discharges to them. Follow-up monitoring indicated that PCBs were still entering the sewer system. Soil sampling results revealed PCB contamination in the utility corridor through which the sewer runs and on several residential properties. In 2006, EPA removed surficial soils that exceeded the state’s direct-contact criterion and lined the sewer with a barrier to prevent further leaking.

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) assisted EPA and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) by providing community health education during the investigation and removal activities:

- ▶ At a March 1, 2006 public meeting, several attendees raised concerns about the PCBs and the planned soil removal action. MDCH addressed the questions at the meeting and prepared a follow-up document, which the city of St. Clair Shores placed on its website.

- ▶ A resident whose husband had moved some of the soil before the contamination was discovered was concerned about her family’s and neighbors’ health. MDCH helped the resident understand the soil sampling results and discussed health implications of past and present exposures with her.

- ▶ EPA referred two residents with cancer cluster concerns to MDCH. The residents felt that there was a high rate of cancer in the area and that it was due to the PCB contamination. Upon reviewing the information provided by the residents, MDCH realized that these concerns had been addressed during the agency’s earlier involvement at the site. The toxicologist informed the residents of the earlier work.

MDCH prepared a health consultation document discussing the community health education activities and the public-health evaluation of the site. The document is available on the MDCH website at www.michigan.gov/mdch-toxics, under “Health Assessments and Related Documents.” A health consultation states whether a public health hazard is posed at a site and provides recommendations to protect public health.

Surficial soils at this site pose no apparent public health hazard. Any past hazard regarding exposure to the soils cannot be determined. Deeper soils pose an indeterminate future hazard. Monitoring should be continued to ensure the integrity of the sewer and the protection of the canals. The city of St. Clair Shores and the MDEQ have implemented a monitoring, investigation, and interim-response plan. A full remediation of the site would remove any potential threat. The MDEQ Remediation and Redevelopment Division’s Superfund Section is conducting further investigations to determine if the site should be recommended for the National Priorities List for clean-up.