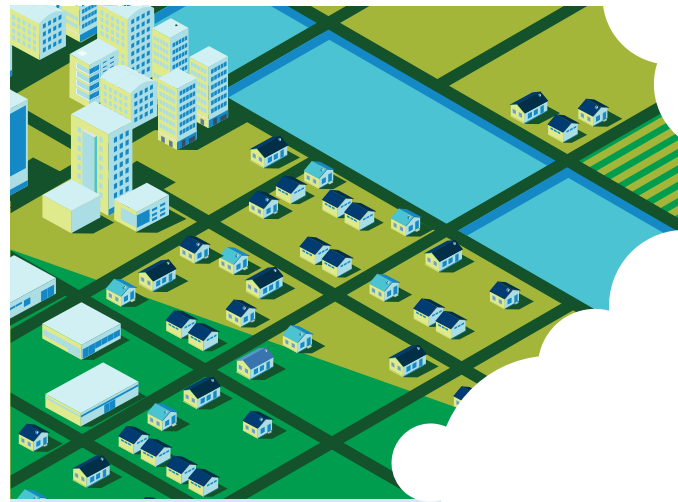


Public Health Assessments

Today's environmental public health issues require multiple agencies, organizations and a variety of health professionals and scientists to work together. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) works to investigate and reduce the public health threat posed by chemical and physical hazards in the environment. One way to investigate environmental threats is through a public health assessment (PHA).

What is a public health assessment?

A PHA reviews available data about possible hazards in the environment and their impact on public health. This data helps MDHHS determine if people are being exposed to toxic substances, whether that exposure is harmful and what must be done to stop or reduce exposure. The PHA process enables MDHHS to identify answers to public health questions and outline follow-up actions to protect public health.



Who conducts public health assessments?

MDHHS conducts PHAs in coordination with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). MDHHS carries out activities on behalf of ATSDR at sites of environmental contamination in Michigan. These activities include assessments, consultations, advisories and community education.

MDHHS works closely with:

- ATSDR.
- The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE).
- Local health departments.

Who is ATSDR?

ATSDR is the lead federal, non-regulatory, environmental public health agency for determining, preventing and reducing the human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances.

ATSDR responds to environmental health emergencies and investigates emerging environmental health threats. They also conduct research on the health impacts of hazardous waste sites and provide guidance to state and local health agencies.

To learn more about ATSDR and its work with state health departments in the PHA process, visit [ATSDR.cdc.gov/PHA-Guidance](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/PHA-Guidance).

How is a PHA conducted?

The following are the steps of a PHA:

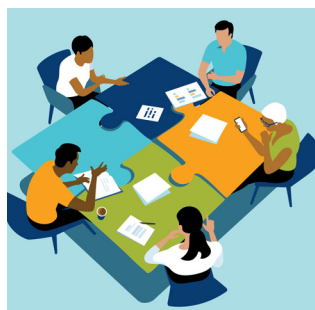


Evaluate exposure: MDHHS evaluates all available environmental data and materials about conditions at the site, typically provided by state or federal agencies like EGLE or EPA. This includes:

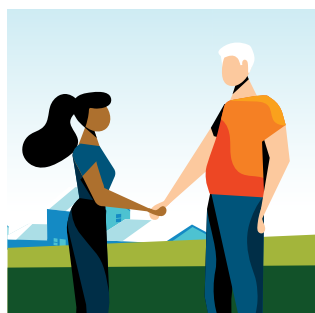
- The amount of chemicals present.
- Where the chemicals are found (air, water, soil or food).
- If there are any physical hazards.
- How people might be exposed (ingesting, breathing or coming into contact with skin).



Evaluate health effects: If the environmental data shows that people are or might be exposed to chemicals, MDHHS uses information about those chemicals to decide whether that exposure could be harmful to human health. The evaluation of health effects focuses on the health impact on the entire community.



Develop recommendations and public health actions: MDHHS offers recommendations for reducing or eliminating human exposure to chemical or physical hazards. If there is an immediate health threat, MDHHS issues a public health advisory to alert the public. MDHHS continues to work with the appropriate agencies to resolve the problem.



Engage communities: The PHA process is interactive. MDHHS looks at all information for the site and considers concerns from the affected community. Some draft PHA documents may be available for review by the community during a public comment period. The public comment period allows members of the community to tell MDHHS how well the PHA documents address their concerns. MDHHS addresses the public's comments in the final document.

The PHA is not a regulatory process and does not evaluate or confirm compliance with laws. MDHHS is not a regulatory agency. The PHA also does not provide medical advice to individuals. MDHHS cannot provide you with medical advice. If you have specific health concerns, you should see a medical doctor.

For More Information

To learn more about public health assessments, contact MDHHS by calling 800-648-6942 or visiting Michigan.gov/PHA.



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