



Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Protecting America's Health from Toxic Exposure

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News Release

For Immediate Release: September 30, 2010

EMBARGOED UNTIL 2PM THURSDAY 9/30
ATSDR RELEASES HEALTH ADVISORY to PREVENT
HEXAVALENT CHROMIUM EXPOSURE in GARFIELD, NJ

ATLANTA – The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is cautioning residents in a small section of Garfield, NJ to stay out of their basements to prevent potential exposure to a toxic metal called hexavalent chromium. High levels of hexavalent chromium were found at a property near the corner of Midland Avenue and Grand Street in Garfield, New Jersey. People in close proximity to this area should avoid using their basements until the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducts an environmental assessment for hexavalent chromium.

ATSDR issues public health advisories rarely, in cases when a hazardous substance poses an immediate and significant risk to human health. Public Health Advisories state what public health actions need to happen to prevent further exposure. "ATSDR's top priority is making sure people are safe from chemical exposure. The recommendations made in today's Public Health Advisory outline specific steps to ensure that the citizens of Garfield remain safe in their homes." says Dr. Thomas Frieden, Administrator of ATSDR.

Hexavalent chromium is a toxic metal that can cause several health problems, including irritation of the lining of the nose, breathing problems (asthma, cough, and shortness of breath) and certain types of cancer, including lung and intestinal cancers. Ground water near the E.C. Electroplating facility is contaminated with hexavalent chromium. During heavy rain, flooding may occur in the basements of some properties located near the site. When the water recedes, the chromium dries out and may be visible in the form of yellow dust or crystals. Accidentally swallowing or inhaling this contaminated dust can expose people to harmful levels of hexavalent chromium.

EPA has already cleaned the property that showed the highest hexavalent chromium levels in surface dust in order to prevent more exposures to contaminated surface dust and to keep contaminated groundwater from re-entering this basement. All other homes and businesses that were identified with contamination have been cleaned by EPA and steps are being taken to

prevent chromium-contaminated groundwater from entering those basements. EPA has previously attempted to contact all residents within the area of concern. Many properties have already been evaluated by EPA. However, residents should contact EPA if their property has not been evaluated. Residents should also contact EPA immediately if they see yellow dust or crystals in the basement of their home as these may be signs of hexavalent chromium contamination.

Residents will be notified by mail of the health advisory's release. ATSDR, EPA, and the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) will hold a public information session to share important details and answer questions. EPA will discuss the next steps for cleaning up the chromium contamination.

When: Wednesday October 6, 2010

Media Availability: 6-7 pm

Time: 7-9pm

Where: Roosevelt School #7 (225 Lincoln Avenue, Garfield, NJ 07026)

For more information about this health advisory, residents may contact ATSDR:

Office of Communication: 770-488-0700 or 1-800-CDC-INFO

For more information on property testing and the E.C. Electroplating site, residents may contact EPA:

Melissa Dimas, Community Involvement Coordinator (212) 637-3677, email: dimas.melissa@epa.gov

Joseph Cosentino, On-Scene Coordinator (732) 906-6983, email: cosentino.joseph@epa.gov

Bonnie Bellow, Media Relations (212) 637-3660

To view ATSDR's Public Health Advisory on the EC Electroplating Site visit <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha/ECElectroplating09282010/ECElectroplating9282010.pdf>

For more information, call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Making sure people are safe from chemical exposure is ATSDR's top priority. ATSDR, a federal agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, worked closely with EPA and state agencies to examine potential health effects from contaminated groundwater and surface dust in Garfield, New Jersey. ATSDR examined data EPA gathered from the properties contaminated with hexavalent chromium.

Members of the news media can request an interview with ATSDR staff by calling the NCEH/ATSDR Office of Communication at 770/ 488-0070.