



Frequently Asked Questions

August 2010

TRONOX, LLC (formerly Kerr McGee)
COLUMBUS, MS

What are the chemicals of concern for the recent sampling investigation?

The chemicals of concern for the EPA April 2010 sampling investigation in the vicinity of the Tronox facility include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, pentachlorophenol (PCP), and dioxin compounds.

Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) are a principal constituent found in creosote, a wood preservative. PAHs occur naturally in soil and/or are widespread in the environment because of man-made sources. In this investigation, the PAHs of concern are represented by a benzo(a)pyrene toxicity equivalence (BaP TEQ).

PCP is a manufactured chemical used industrially as a preservative in wood treating processes.

Dioxins are impurities associated with the manufacture of PCP. In this investigation, dioxin concentrations are represented by a tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin toxicity equivalents, expressed as TCDD TEQ.

What were the overall findings of this EPA investigation?

Laboratory results of the sampling investigation indicate the following overall findings:

SOIL Sampling Results ABOVE Screening Levels:

BaP TEQ – 9 of 15 samples
PCP – 0 of 15 samples
TCDD TEQ – 4 of 15 samples

SEDIMENT Sampling Results ABOVE Screening Levels:

BaP – 6 of 10 samples
PCP – 3 of 10 samples

What are screening levels?

It is common for environmental risk assessments to begin with a comparison of site-specific contaminant concentrations to screening levels. Screening levels are conservative risk-based values developed by EPA to help identify contaminants of potential concern. Screening levels are not action levels for further investigation or cleanup.

What are the potential health effects of the chemicals of concern from this investigation (PAHs, PCP, and Dioxins)?

Potential health effects are dependent upon the degree of actual exposure.

PAHs – PAHs have been found to cause cancer and reproductive effects and to cause harmful effects to the skin, body fluids, and disease resistance in animals. These effects have not, however, been seen in people.

PCP – Exposure to high levels of PCP can cause increases in body temperature, liver effects, damage to the immune system, reproductive effects, and developmental effects.

Dioxins – One chemical in the group of dioxins, 2,3,7,8 - TCDD, has been shown to be very toxic in animal studies. It causes effects on the skin and may cause cancer in people.

Additional information on all of these chemicals can be found at
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxprofiles>.

What can I do to minimize exposure to these chemicals?

There are a number of simple proactive steps you can take to protect yourself and your family:

- Discourage children from playing in the ditches, eating soil, and placing soiled objects into their mouths;
- Make sure that children wash their hands before meals, nap time, and bedtime; and

Which government agencies are responsible for the oversight of environmental issues associated with the Tronox facility?

The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) is the lead state agency that oversees the on-site groundwater pump & treat system at the Tronox (formerly Kerr McGee) site.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the lead federal agency that is overseeing site investigation and response activities.

How does the Tronox bankruptcy affect what EPA is doing?

Due to the recent Tronox bankruptcy, EPA can no longer effectively manage all aspects of this site under our authority under the federal law, the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act. The federal Superfund law was created by Congress to deal with bankrupt and/or abandoned sites of industrial pollution. Therefore, responsibility for the site is shifting to the EPA Region 4 Superfund program, who will be the lead program starting in September 2010. Superfund will evaluate this sampling data and make decisions about next steps. Superfund is committed to continuing to engage the community in all aspects of the response.

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