



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Early Test Results Find No Health Threat in School

Grand Traverse Overall Supply Superfund Site

Greilickville, Michigan

June 2005

For more information

You may contact any of these EPA team members to learn more about the Grand Traverse Overall Supply situation:

Don de Blasio
Community Involvement Coordinator
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
(312) 886-4360
deblasio.don@epa.gov

Robert Paulson
Community Involvement Coordinator
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
(312) 886-0272
paulson.robert@epa.gov

Linda Martin
Remedial Project Manager
Superfund Division (SR-6J)
(312) 886-3854
martin.lindab@epa.gov

Ralph Dollhopf
On-Scene Coordinator
U.S. EPA Region 5
dollhopf.ralph@epa.gov
(may be reached by phone through
de Blasio or Paulson)

EPA Chicago address:
EPA Region 5,
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604
Chicago toll free number:
(800) 621-8431,
weekdays 10:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Official site documents can be reviewed at:

Traverse Area District Library
22 Sixth St.
Traverse City

Internet: www.epa.gov/region5/sites/index.htm#MI

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 preliminary test results show air quality in Norris Elementary School poses no health risks to students, staff or residents, based on guidelines developed by state and federal health agencies.

During spring break in late March, EPA investigated air quality inside the school, which is near a building that housed the former Grand Traverse Overall Supply (GTOS) commercial dry cleaning and laundry operation. Chemicals from the dry-cleaning operation that have seeped into the soil and ground water have the potential to give off vapors in and around the GTOS building and buildings adjacent to the GTOS site.

After sampling, EPA determined that vapors from ground water contamination are not getting into the school and the Agency plans to take measures to ensure that contaminant vapors will not enter the school.

EPA is double checking all sampling results and plans to issue a final report this summer and then hold a public meeting to discuss the situation.

School Investigation

The school investigation followed air and soil gas testing in early March at the GTOS building by EPA's environmental response team. The team collected soil gas samples from beneath the school and air samples from within the school using a trace atmospheric gas analyzer (TAGA) vehicle, which is a specially equipped mobile lab. EPA analyzed the samples for presence of the dry-cleaning chemical perchloroethylene, known as perc or PCE. This is a chemical that was used in the dry cleaning operations at the former GTOS facility. The TAGA also looked for other hazardous chemicals that result from PCE breaking down in the environment such as trichloroethylene (TCE), dichloroethylene and vinyl chloride.

In addition to its uses in dry cleaning, PCE is found in a variety of consumer products. These include printing ink, correction fluid, glues, sealants, lubricants, paint removers, rug and upholstery cleaners, and stain and rust removers. PCE and TCE are also used in industry as a solvent to degrease metal parts. When they're used in our homes, schools and places of business, these products can release small amounts of chemicals into the air. Dry-cleaned clothes also release small amounts of PCE. Because these chemicals are so common, it is sometimes hard to determine if air concentrations result from use of consumer products inside a building or from environmental contamination under a building.

Air quality health standards

Before air sampling was conducted at the Norris school, EPA consulted with the Michigan Department of Community Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. ATSDR, as it is known, is an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that studies how pollution affects public health. ATSDR and the Michigan agency established “screening values” for the pollution associated with the GTOS facility. Most soil, water and air in the heavily industrialized United States contain chemicals of one kind or another in various concentrations. Screening values help officials determine acceptable levels of contamination that are safe for people who may be exposed to the pollution.

To make sure students, staff and residents are completely safe, EPA used two sets of screening values to check the air quality inside Norris school. The first and most protective standard is the draft *Acceptable Indoor Air Concentrations* values developed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. MDEQ’s standards protect people who occupy a building 24 hours a day, 350 days a year for 30 years. This screening value is considered very conservative because it is unlikely anyone would be present in a building for that much time. The other screening values, *Environmental Media Evaluation Guides*, developed by ATSDR, look at chemical concentrations people could be exposed to for up to a year without affecting their health.

Screening values for soil gas under the school were developed by using MDEQ’s acceptable indoor air concentrations and multiplying by 10. Preliminary testing results indicate that air quality in the school were below all these strict health standards.

Follow-up work continues this summer

EPA will continue to monitor the GTOS site throughout the summer. The tentative schedule includes:

- June – investigators will look for the contamination under and around the GTOS building that triggered the air quality concerns. The dry cleaning chemicals are suspected of contaminating what is called “ground water,” which is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water. The pollution may have formed a “plume,” which is underground contamination that has the potential of moving. Investigators will also consider possible ways the school can be sealed off from the underground pollution. In EPA jargon, these techniques are called “engineering controls.”

- July – design of the engineering controls and air monitoring at the Norris school building.
- August – install engineering controls at Norris school with a completion date of mid-September
- September-early November – air monitoring at the Norris school building to determine the effectiveness of the engineering controls

Site history

Grand Traverse Overall Supply began operating in the Greilickville building in the early 1950s, and in the late 1960s it added dry cleaning services. Dry cleaning was stopped in 1987, but commercial laundering continued. From 1955 through 1977, wastewater from the laundry and dry cleaning operation was discharged into four unlined lagoons and a dry well on the site. In 1977, the waste was sent to the municipal sewer system and the lagoons and dry well were abandoned. In 1978 nearby ground water was found to be contaminated with chemicals used in dry cleaning. From 1978 to 1980 under the oversight of the state of Michigan, GTOS replaced contaminated drinking-water wells near the site and filled three of the four lagoons and converted them to parking lots. The fourth lagoon was turned into a grassy area. In 1979, the dry well and surrounding contaminated soil was dug up and removed.

The area was placed on EPA’s National Priorities List in 1983 because of the ground-water contamination. Sites on the NPL are among the nation’s most hazardous waste areas and are eligible for cleanup under the federal Superfund program. In 1989-90 EPA conducted a study of the area called a remedial investigation that concluded ground-water contamination had declined sharply and no longer posed a threat to human health.

In 1992 EPA issued a document called a Record of Decision that determined no further action was necessary at this site because the earlier cleanup had addressed the source of ground-water contamination. However, in 1996 a private environmental consulting firm, doing a study of the GTOS building for another company, found soil contamination under the floor of the dry cleaning-laundry facility. In 2001-02 Michigan DEQ sampled near the site and found contamination in the ground water believed to be coming from under the GTOS building. Michigan DEQ gave this new information to EPA for evaluation and further investigation.

This letter has been included at the request of the Traverse City Area Public Schools.



Traverse City Area Public Schools Norris Elementary School

10781 E. Cherry Bend Rd.

Traverse City, Michigan 49684

(231) 933-8660

Catherine L. Meyer
Principal

Sandra Griffin
Secretary

Linda Lintner
Secretary

June 21, 2005

Dear Norris Staff and Families:

I hope this letter finds you enjoying a safe and relaxing summer.

The purpose of this correspondence is to give you more information regarding the air quality tests results as determined by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I had mentioned to you in one of our May newsletters that we would pass along any further information and keep you well informed.

Over the past several months, the Traverse City Area Public Schools and the United States Environmental Protection Agency have worked cooperatively and have been in continuous communication to ensure a safe environment for our students, staff, and families at Norris Elementary.

The EPA report outlines the March investigation and its results as well as summer schedule for follow-up monitoring of the GTOS site. Basically, the next steps will include working closely together, finding ways to seal off the school from underground pollution, and continue to monitor air quality in order to maintain our safe environment.

Please note that the protective standards used included the screening value of someone who would "occupy a building 24 hours a day, 350 days a year for 30 years." Based on those strict standards, it was determined that there is not a health risk to our students or staff.

I thank you for taking the time to read the report. If you have any questions, please call me at 933-8662 and leave a message. I will be checking my phone messages regularly throughout the summer. You may also contact the EPA project manager, Mr. Don deBlasio at (312) 886-4360.

Continue to enjoy the summer.

Respectfully yours,

Catherine L. Meyer-Looze
Principal



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Region 5
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

FIRST CLASS

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

**GRAND TRAVERSE OVERALL SUPPLY SUPERFUND SITE:
Early Test Results Find No Health Threat in School**

This fact sheet is printed on paper made of recycled fibers.