

Midlothian Community Meeting
Meeting Notes
January 21, 2010

Introductions –

Robin Scott, Facilitator, Open Circle Consulting

Guidelines –

Each community member wanting to ask a question or make a comment will be given two minutes to do so then we will move on to the next person. We ask that you do not interrupt when someone else is speaking, please take all side conversations outside so they will not distract others, and please set cell phones, pagers, etc, on vibrate or turn them off.

Who we are and how we are different – Tina Forrester, PhD

ATSDR's mission is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and diseases related to exposures to toxic substances. ATSDR currently has a team of 12 well-rounded scientists working on the Midlothian site response. We have medical doctors, epidemiologists, toxicologists, and veterinarians that are looking at data related to the Midlothian area. In order to fulfill our mandated duties ATSDR may prepare a public health assessment or health consultation, conduct health surveillance, collect toxicological information, and carry out community involvement or health education activities.

Overview of the process diagram (slide) – we are currently in the top third of the diagram. The diagram gives the steps ATSDR follows in an evaluation and what actions may be taken to accomplish those steps.

Evaluation of site data (slide) – there are different ways that people may be exposed to environmental contaminants. The slide shows a few of these scenarios. ATSDR's team will determine what exposure pathways exist in Midlothian and then address these pathways.

History and current activities – Jennifer Lyke

What brought us here? In August 2005 ATSDR received a petition with a number of signatures that summarized a list of issues and/or concerns that community members had regarding the air in Midlothian. Some of the concerns were: emitted chemicals are not fully characterized; persistence and continuous low-level exposure to emitted chemicals; impact on pregnant women, infants, children, elderly, and immuno-suppressed; protectiveness of regulatory health-based screening levels; effectiveness and reliability of available TCEQ air monitoring data; location of TCEQ monitoring stations (past and present); rates of health problems (i.e. leukemia, birth defects, childhood cancers, down syndrome, respiratory problems).

In December 2005 the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) conducted a community survey where they went door to door in various neighborhoods to collect community concerns. DSHS then took the lead with ATSDR oversight in looking at available air data for the Midlothian area. An initial document was released in December 2007. The document received numerous comments and concerns from the public as well as other scientific reviewers.

In March 2009 there was a Congressional hearing. A decision was made that ATSDR would take a more comprehensive look using a broader scope to look at the concerns in Midlothian. ATSDR will look at not only the available environmental data but at cancer incidence, birth defects, and animal concerns as well.

In July 2009 ATSDR conducted a community survey so that we could collect concerns from a larger portion of the community. To date we had only heard from a small number of people and this survey gave us the opportunity to hear from more citizens. ATSDR contracted with the University of North Texas to randomly call community members and set up appointments. We had five teams in Midlothian for a week and we were able to interview 100 people. ATSDR continued to hear the same concerns as received in the petition. There were some people who felt there was a problem as well as those who did not.

In September 2009 ATSDR and DSHS formed a Community Assistance Panel. Shortly after the formation of the group ATSDR decided to dissolve this group. ATSDR felt that they needed to expand on the idea of notifying the community as a whole rather than be inclusive to such a small group.

What are ATSDR's planned activities –

ATSDR is here tonight to begin communication with the community as a whole. We plan to respond to community concerns by introducing our Community Public Health Response Plan (PHRP). The PHRP is designed to guide ATSDR and DSHS on how to move forward and to assure that the community's questions and concerns are addressed. The PHRP is a living document and can change as needed and will help keep the agencies accountable for the work produced. It will allow the community to know what steps the agencies will take and where they are in the process. The PHRP will be up for public comment and ATSDR is strongly encouraging community members to look at the document and submit any comments or concerns they may have. The public comment period will begin tonight and will last for 60 days or until March 19, 2010. Copies of the PHRP will be distributed tonight after the meeting, and will also be available on our website, City Hall, and the A.H. Meadows Library.

Community Questions and Comments:

1. What is the timeline for the completion of this study?
2. Historically it has taken many years to get information, will it take as long this time?
3. Is the only environmental data you will be looking at is air data? Will there be any water monitoring or sampling done and evaluated?
4. Have you already started taking samples and if so can we have the dates the samples were collected? If you are looking at existing data can we have those dates of collection?
5. Sounds like you are analyzing existing data. There are many who feel that the cement plants control the monitoring and what data is collected. Would this data really show the truth?
6. How do you determine that the data you are looking at is good enough to determine potential for health problems?
7. Where are we in your process at this point?
8. How many of the four industries in Midlothian are out of compliance at this time or have been in the past few years? Will you be looking at that as part of the process?
9. The petition is all anecdotal information. Have anecdotal data been validated? So how reliable are these concerns? Is there a way to qualify the concerns that were listed in the petition?

Midlothian Community Meeting
January 21, 2010

10. Through all the monitoring has there been any data gathered recently that indicates there is a problem?
11. How will you determine if Midlothian air is different (better or worse) than Dallas air?
12. If you determine there's a higher rate of birth defects, etc in Midlothian how can you say what caused it?
13. Are you looking at long term agricultural uses in the Midlothian area, especially in the areas next to these plants? There were documented problems with crops and animals in pastures adjacent to the plants in the past and now they are again using this land for crops and cattle. Is it now safe?
14. You already have health data and my health has been changing rapidly over the years – what can we do to share with you the information you need to prove that peoples' health is getting worse and could be because of environmental conditions?
15. In the mid 1990's I requested that ATSDR come to Midlothian and see what was going on. I was told they couldn't without a request from the state. In 2005 Sal Meir petitioned ATSDR and finally got someone to start looking into our concerns. Sometime during this time TCEQ misplaced several years worth of data that had been collected during elevated emissions and to my knowledge the data still has not been found. How can you evaluate the air without that data? This data would have showed what we were exposed to during the worst times of hazardous waste burning. I sent several hair samples to your agency that showed elevations in mercury, I hope you are looking at them as well. This community has endured multiple environmental episodes, melt downs, fluff burns, tire fires, and plants burning radioactive materials. Are you looking at cesium 132? The TRI data from 1990 – 2006 shows several times that the contaminant levels from these plants exceeded what is considered to be a safe level. Do you have this information and if so will you be taking it into consideration? We have been made to endure this for two decades. The plants are not burning hazardous waste at this time and I hope you take that into consideration when making your determination that affects our lives. Please help us assure that what these plants exposed our families to in the past will never happen again. There is technology available that can help protect us. We want the plants to do the right thing.
16. I have contacted DSHS regarding cancer concerns in the Mansfield area. They said they have been making phone calls but no one that I know has been contacted.
17. What substances are currently being monitored for? Is methylmercury being looked at?
18. Is there any portion of this that will evaluate where pollution is going and who it effects? Will you target down wind?
19. Are we going to get a copy of the PHRP?
20. In the big picture who funds your agency. Is Joe Barton part of the committee that funds you?
21. It's really important to look at the past exposures and not just current data. TRI is not a complete list, how extensive is your list of data? Is there a way to look at what is shipped to the plants for burning rather than what they say is burnt and monitored for? Can you look at what the plants report as well as what they burn and determine potential health effects? What chemicals caused birth defects?
22. A lot of illnesses are from long term exposure, are you going to go way back and look at what we were exposed to 20 years ago?
23. Where do executives of these plants live? Do they live here or somewhere else?
24. On the original CAP that was established how were community members selected? Was the dissolution of the group at the request of someone on the panel? Was it a community member or industry?
25. Is there any plan to have a steering committee?

26. I am not being heard by my doctors about mercury testing. My family is having the symptoms of mercury poisoning but we have no insurance. What can I do?
27. Is the list of chemicals being looked at in Midlothian available for everyone to look at? And if so how can we find out what types of health effects are related to those chemicals?
28. I've heard this same thing over the past several years. Now we are starting over. Why don't you come out and tell the truth? Your bosses tweak the documents until we can't understand what we are exposed to. You're jumping all over the benzene from gas compression stations but you don't have time to do anything for us. This community needs to fight permits that the plants apply for. Lawsuits are a waste of time. Can we move forward instead of going backwards for once? What happened to the 3rd and 4th quarter air monitoring data? The TCEQ put out reports for the 1st & 2nd quarter.
29. How many agencies are represented here tonight? Can any of you subpoena records from these plants? Why has mercury been ignored in the past, it is one of the most dangerous chemicals being released today. There were horrible effects in Japan after the war and we don't want it here. It's much more dangerous in air. When you see it on the horizon it looks like blood running with the different colors.
30. What are you going to be sampling for? It sounds like you're looking at only existing data.
31. Is it true that the data is being collected on a particular schedule? (every 6th day)
32. People recognize that TCEQ data is flawed and that it can not be trusted. Is there other data being looked at as well? Are you saying you're not collecting any data? Don't come back and say there's nothing if you really don't know. Don't waste our time.
33. I'm glad you have scientists looking at this. There is a cloud over this community and I hope this will finally be over.
34. I am concerned about my children's safety. If you find businesses that are guilty of breaking the rules what enforcement power do you have and how will you apply it to the industries? Do you have any enforcement to regulate industry?
35. Who does have regulatory authority?
36. Is there any outreach being done with local physicians? Have they been contacted to see if they feel there is a problem?
37. What has been done in the last ten years about putting proper filters on the stacks?
38. If you are not regulatory then what is the purpose for all of this?

Next Steps – Jennifer Lyke

- Provide everyone with a copy of the PHRP
- The comment period will run from January 21 – March 19, 2010
- There will be another meeting on February 22, 2010 where the some of the scientists working on this will be here to present and answer questions
- The communities input of the PHRP is an integral part of accomplishing our tasks

Midlothian Community Meeting
January 21, 2010

Communication Strategies – Robin Scott

What could have made the meeting run better?

Changes:

- Save comments and questions until the end so that we can get all of the information
- At the next meeting I want real information and not just plans, bring more data
- Have a better PA system
- More effort in advertising (advertise in a larger publication, and at libraries, radio, email, flyer, if we get one we will make copies and pass it along to others).
- You will probably need a bigger room next time
- Include EPA
- Flip charts should be up on the stage so everyone can see them or put them on overheads
- Can you video tape the next meeting so that those who were unable to come could see what was said

What went well:

- the time, date, and location
- evening is good
- this is a big group
- meeting was encouraging
- integrity and openness
- good information

Note: An overwhelming number of people attended as a result of receiving a post card.

Conclusion of meeting