

Does ATSDR assist communities located near hazardous waste sites that are not on the NPL?

Yes. More than half of the sites at which ATSDR has worked are not on the NPL. ATSDR works at non-NPL sites at the request of EPA, state, and local officials, and in response to petitions.

What information does ATSDR provide through its Web site?

Information on ATSDR's Web site includes these items:

- information about ATSDR;
- a database containing information on all sites at which ATSDR has worked;
- online learning programs;
- maps of hazardous waste sites;
- news from ATSDR;
- short, easy-to-read fact sheets on 159 of the most common contaminants at Superfund sites; and
- links to related Internet sites.

ATSDR's Web address is <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

How do I contact ATSDR for

**For more information,
contact ATSDR's toll-free information line:**

(888) 42-ATSDR. . . that's (888) 422-8737

ATSDR's Internet address is <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>



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About ATSDR

What is the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)?

ATSDR is the principal federal public health agency involved with hazardous waste issues. The agency's mission is to serve the public by using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances. An agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ATSDR was created by the Superfund law in 1980. That law started a program to find and clean up the most dangerous hazardous waste sites. Formally organized in 1985, ATSDR is responsible for carrying out the health-related parts of the Superfund law and of other laws that protect the public from hazardous wastes and environmental spills of hazardous substances. It is responsible for determining, as best as possible, whether people have harmful health effects from their exposure to hazardous substances.

Where is ATSDR located? How big is it?

ATSDR's headquarters are in Atlanta, Georgia. The agency also has 10 regional offices and an office in Washington, D.C. The multidisciplinary staff of about 430 employees includes epidemiologists, physicians, toxicologists, engineers, public health educators, and support staff.

What does ATSDR do?

ATSDR carries out a variety of activities to help prevent or reduce the harmful effects of exposure to hazardous substances, including these:

- ATSDR advises the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as well as other federal or state agencies, community members, and other interested parties, on the health impacts of



hazardous waste sites and toxic spills. ATSDR identifies communities where people might be exposed to hazardous substances in the environment. The agency also determines how hazardous a site is and recommends actions that need to be taken to safeguard people's health. It does this by issuing public health advisories, public health assessments, and health consultations.

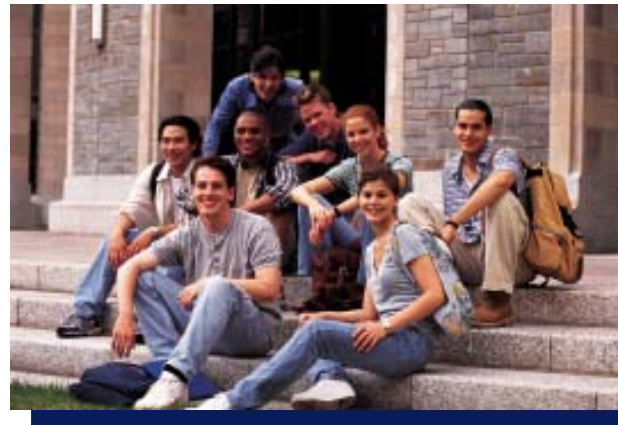
- ATSDR conducts studies in some communities at or near hazardous waste sites and toxic spills to determine whether people's health has been affected by their exposure to hazardous substances. ATSDR also funds research conducted by universities, state agencies, and others who study the relationship between exposure to hazardous substances and disease.
- ATSDR educates doctors, other health care professionals, and communities about the health effects associated with exposure to hazardous substances and ways to lessen or prevent such exposure. For example, the agency has developed educational programs that teach children and parents how to reduce lead exposure.
- ATSDR publishes *Toxicological Profiles* on many of the hazardous substances most commonly found at Superfund sites. The agency also publishes 2-page summaries of the information in the profiles called ToxFAQs. In these easy-to-understand fact sheets, communities can find answers to the most frequently

asked questions about exposures to hazardous substances and the effects of those exposures on their health.

- ATSDR provides technical support and advice to other federal agencies, states, and local governments that respond to accidental spills or releases of hazardous substances, such as those from train wrecks, fires, and other emergencies.
- ATSDR maintains four registries of people who have been exposed to hazardous substances—trichloroethylene (TCE), trichloroethane (TCA), benzene, and dioxin. These registries track health data from participants to learn more about the health consequences of their exposure to low levels of these chemicals. ATSDR plans to initiate a tremolite asbestos registry in 2003. ATSDR also is assisting the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene in developing a World Trade Center registry for people exposed to smoke, dust, and substances released in the collapse of the buildings.

What can ATSDR do to help a community that could be exposed to hazardous substances?

ATSDR can help communities in a variety of ways, including working with them to resolve their health concerns, determining whether the community is actually being exposed to hazardous substances, educating residents about health hazards, and training health care providers.



One of ATSDR's key responsibilities is to evaluate health risks from hazardous substances at Superfund and other hazardous waste sites to determine the extent of hazard to the community. An important part of determining whether a health hazard exists is to meet with members of the community to hear their health concerns.

ATSDR can take steps to help communities deal with those health concerns. For example, at a site in southwestern Virginia, residents were concerned about children eating contaminated fish from a river in which fishing was banned. ATSDR worked with the community to develop an educational program to teach children not to eat fish from the river. ATSDR also works with local health care providers to ensure they have the information they need about possible exposures to hazardous substances in their community.

ATSDR might send staff to a community to draw blood or collect urine to determine whether people are being exposed to a hazardous substance. ATSDR has been able to reassure some communities that people there were not being exposed to hazardous substances. In other communities, after determining that some people were being exposed to hazardous substances, ATSDR has been able to advise community members on how to reduce their exposure. For example, ATSDR and its partners in the state and local health departments worked with the community of Jasper County, Missouri, on ways to reduce exposure to lead, which was processed in the area for many years. In part because of the health education program, the number of children with high levels of lead in their blood (greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter) dropped by 86% in 10 years.

What are some of the things ATSDR cannot do to help a community?

There are some things that ATSDR does not have the legal authority to do. ATSDR cannot provide medical care or treatment to people who have been exposed to hazardous substances, even if the exposure has made them sick. ATSDR also cannot provide funds to relocate community members or to clean up a site.



How does ATSDR's role in helping communities differ from EPA's role?

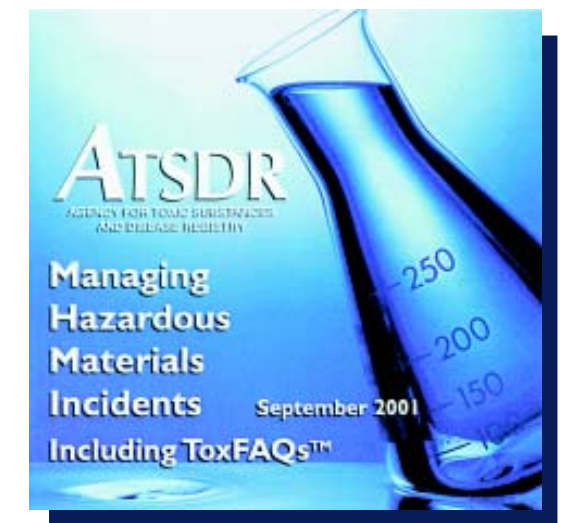
Unlike EPA, ATSDR is not a regulatory agency. ATSDR is a public health agency that advises EPA on the health aspects of hazardous waste sites or spills. ATSDR makes recommendations to EPA when specific actions are needed to protect the public's health. For example, ATSDR might recommend providing an alternative water supply, removing contaminated material, or restricting access to a site. EPA usually follows these recommendations. However, ATSDR cannot require EPA to follow its recommendations.

How does ATSDR become involved with a site? How can I get ATSDR involved with a site?

ATSDR is required by the Superfund law to evaluate all sites that are on or proposed for the National Priorities List (NPL). Specifically, ATSDR conducts public health assessments of NPL sites, as well as of all sites proposed for the NPL.

EPA, state agencies, local governments, or other federal agencies can request ATSDR's help with a site or with accidental spills or releases. Anyone can also request that ATSDR do a health consultation, another method of evaluating a site or release. Most requests for health consultations come from EPA and state and local agencies.

Anyone can petition ATSDR to conduct public health assessments of sites. For more information about how to petition ATSDR to conduct a public health assessment, call the agency's toll-free phone number, 1-888-42-ATSDR (1-888-422-8737).



How does ATSDR work with states and local health departments?

ATSDR has cooperative agreements with 31 states, Puerto Rico, and the Gila River Indian Community to conduct site-related public health assessments or health consultations, health studies, and health education. ATSDR provides technical assistance and oversees site evaluations and related activities conducted by cooperative agreement partners. ATSDR also assists local health departments in investigating health concerns that might be related to hazardous substances.