

# Epidemiology

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## Environmental Public Health Program



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The Environmental Public Health Program evaluates the possible hazards to human health associated with toxic substances in the environment. Epidemiological studies and toxicological risk assessments are used to evaluate human exposures to hazardous substances and potential health risks. Chemical contaminants can enter our environment from emergency release events, hazardous waste disposal, global transport, local deposition and other sources.

Program objectives include:

- Develop intervention strategies to reduce or eliminate chemical exposures of human health concern
- Foster two-way communication in order to address community concerns about contaminants
- Provide information about the health risks associated with hazardous substances

### Programs and Activities

Alaska Lead Surveillance Program  
 Alaska Statewide Hair Mercury Biomonitoring Program  
 Subsistence/traditional foods safety  
 Response to hazardous substances emergency events  
 Public health consultations at sites that contain hazardous substances

### Hot topics- What's new in the Environmental Public Health Program

- Proceedings from conference, "Ingestion of Lead from Spent Ammunition: Implications for Wildlife and Humans"

The Environmental Public Health Program recently participated in a conference convened by The Peregrine Fund discussing the available research on the effects and risks of lead exposure from spent bullet fragments. The Peregrine Fund, a conservation group for birds of prey, convened the conference after a decade of research on wild California Condors in the Grand Canyon region of Arizona revealed that lead exposure from spent ammunition is the most important factor impeding the full recovery of the species in the area. The research also suggested that lead from spent ammunition could be a concern to people who eat game harvested with lead bullets or shot shells.

Click [here](#) to find EPHP's contribution, "Human Exposure to Lead from Ammunition in the Circumpolar North" and [here](#) for the full conference proceedings.

- A Women's Guide to Eating Fish in Alaska

Alaska Fish Consumption Guidelines for women who are or can become pregnant, nursing mothers, and children age 12 years and under are now available. Click [here](#) for more information.

- Targeted Mercury Biomonitoring Project in Rural Alaska

The Environmental Public Health Program is currently conducting a targeted mercury biomonitoring project in rural Alaska. The project aims to determine if there is a link between fish consumption and hair mercury levels in populations that eat northern pike. This project is being conducted in collaboration with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and is taking place in communities on or near several national wildlife refuges throughout Alaska. Results will be available to the public in the fall of



## Highlights

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## Epidemiology Programs

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## Public Health

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- Certification & Licensing
- Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
- Epidemiology
- Injury Prevention & EMS
- Laboratories
- Public Health Nursing
- State Medical Examiner
- Vital Statistics
- Women's, Children's and Family Health

2009. Click here for USFWS and Environmental Public Health Program project fact sheets.

- Information for health care providers and parents about lead testing in children

For information about lead testing in children, please click here.

**Fact sheets and information on common environmental health issues in Alaska**

*\*Links to external resources are provided as a public service and do not imply endorsement\**

- Alaska Fish Facts and Consumption Guidelines - State of Alaska
- Arsenic - Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Arsenic - Municipality of Anchorage
- Asbestos - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Carbon monoxide poisoning - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Environmental cancers - American Cancer Society
- "A Journey Into Cancer's Causes - Alaska Natives Ask about Cancer" - Siobhan Wescott, Alaska Native Health Board (721 KB)
- Environmental dust - Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation
- Lead - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Mercury - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Mold - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Mold - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDEs) - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Tetrachloroethylene (PERC) - Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)
- Volcano facts - State of Alaska
- Volcano facts - U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- Volcano facts - Alaska Volcano Observatory
- Wildfire smoke - State of Alaska

**Don't see your topic?** Click here for a link to all State of Alaska Section of Epidemiology Bulletins

Environmental Public Health Program Staff - check out who works in the program, what they do, and how to contact them

**Public Comments and Questions**

The Environmental Public Health Program welcomes comments and questions from the public. Please use this form to send us your comments or questions. Thank you.

The public is encouraged to contact the Environmental Public Health Program with any questions they might have regarding environmental health issues.

**Other Links of Interest**

Many other credible environmental health resources are available online, and individuals seeking general information about health and the environment are encouraged to take advantage of the following useful sites:



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Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
Includes "ToxFAQs" fact sheets that describe the health effects of hazardous substances.

ExToxNet (The EXTension TOXicology NETwork)  
Includes fact sheets for the environmental and human health effects of pesticides.

*and explanations of general environmental toxicology concepts.*

Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

The State of Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation

CDC/NCEH

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Environmental Health

[State of Alaska](#) | [Alaska Pioneer Homes](#) | [Behavioral Health](#) | [Boards and Councils](#)  
[Finance and Management Services](#) | [Health Care Services](#) | [Juvenile Justice](#) | [Office of Children's Services](#)  
[Public Assistance](#) | [Public Health](#) | [Seniors and Disabilities Services](#)  
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# Epidemiology

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## Public Health Consultations at Sites That Contain Hazardous Substances (ATSDR Cooperative Agreement)

The Environmental Public Health Program collaborates with ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) to address concerns related to contaminants in communities. These health consultations consider the levels of hazardous substances at a site, whether people might be exposed to contaminants and by what pathways, and what harm the substances might cause to people. Specific recommendations are developed to address any identified hazard.

During site-related activities, community meetings are held in order to share health-related information, listen to community concerns, and incorporate community knowledge into the decision-making process.

ATSDR has posted all health assessments and consultations for the State of Alaska on the following website:  
[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/HCPHA.asp?State=Alaska](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/PHA/HCPHA.asp?State=Alaska)

### What is ATSDR?

ATSDR, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, is a federal public health agency involved with hazardous waste issues. It is responsible for preventing or reducing the harmful effects of exposure to hazardous substances on human health and quality of life. The agency is responsible for addressing the health-related parts of the 1980 Superfund law and other laws that protect the public from hazardous wastes and environmental spills.

Other federal agencies like the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, states, and local governments may request ATSDR's help with a site, such as in cases of accidental spills or releases. ATSDR usually conducts public health assessments and health consultations to determine whether people have been exposed to environmental contaminants at high enough levels to impact their health and wellbeing.

ATSDR is based in Atlanta, Georgia, with 10 regional offices and an office in Washington, D.C. The agency has cooperative agreements with 23 states, including Alaska, to provide technical assistance to state public health employees conducting site-related public health assessments or health consultations, health studies, and health education.

More information about ATSDR is available online at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov). ATSDR also provides comprehensive information on individual hazardous substances in its *Toxicological Profiles* and *ToxFAQs* databases.

If you are interested in a public health consultation or assessment for your community, please contact Lori Verbrugge either by phone (907-269-8086) or e-mail ([lori.verbrugge@alaska.gov](mailto:lori.verbrugge@alaska.gov)).

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