



Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
Atlanta GA 30333

AUG 16 2006

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-1204

Dear Senator Durbin:

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has reviewed information pertinent to your request for assistance related to concerns about possible community exposures to contaminants, including tritium, heavy metals and arsenic in the Godley drinking water, and whether those exposures could be related to cancers and other adverse health outcomes being experienced in this community. Your May 23rd letter identified releases from the Braidwood Nuclear Generating facility as the source for the tritium in the water supply. ATSDR acknowledged your letter to be a petition for a public health assessment. We are pleased to provide you the following information on our follow-up to address your concerns.

ATSDR has collaborated with the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Will County Health Department (WCHD), to collect and review available data to respond to your concerns. In response to the water releases from the Braidwood Nuclear facility, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has directed the sampling of many private wells in Godley and other areas near the facility.

IDPH has provided individual letters to residents providing a health-based interpretation of their private well results. Well water testing results for almost 400 wells have shown only four wells with detectable levels of tritium (and those wells were located downgradient of the releases and not in the town of Godley). The highest tritium level detected was 1,524 picocuries per liter – well below the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's regulated allowable level of 20,000 picocuries per liter. ATSDR, NCEH, and IDPH would not expect exposure to the levels of tritium found in the wells to cause any adverse health effects.

ATSDR and IDPH also coordinated closely with WCHD to review additional sampling of private wells conducted by the county. The only heavy metal analyses conducted were for arsenic. No samples contained arsenic above the 10 parts per billion detection limit, and we concluded that arsenic is not found at levels that would cause adverse health effects. The county also tested a number of wells for nitrates, *E. coli* and total coliform levels. A few wells exceeded acceptable levels for these contaminants and the county is working with the well owners to correct the problem.

Given the level of concerns expressed by the community related to perceived elevated rates of cancers, IDPH's Division of Epidemiology reviewed data for cancer incidence, childhood cancer mortality, infant mortality, low birth weight and congenital anomalies in Will County and Braidwood, Illinois. In January 2006, IDPH published the "Pediatric Cancer Incidence and Mortality in the Vicinity of Nuclear Power Plants in Illinois". These investigations by IDPH found that the pediatric cancer incidence and mortality rates were not significantly different from those for comparison groups. In addition, they found no evidence of an increased cancer incidence rate after the startup of the nuclear power plants. A copy of this report is enclosed.

IDPH will continue to evaluate new sampling results for tritium in private wells related to releases from the Braidwood Nuclear facility. Since other contaminants were not found at levels that would be expected to cause adverse health effects, and the state has already addressed the health outcome concerns related to communities, such as Godley, living near nuclear facilities in Illinois, ATSDR considers the responses to your concerns to be appropriately addressed by the state.

Thank you for referring your concerns to ATSDR and for your patience in awaiting a response. If you have further questions, please contact Ms. Michelle Colledge, ATSDR Regional Representative, Region V, at (312) 886-1462. You may also contact Ms. Leslie Campbell, ATSDR Petition Coordinator, at (404) 498-0473, if you have questions about the ATSDR petition process.

Sincerely,



William Cibulas Jr., Ph.D.
CAPT, U.S. Public Health Service
Director
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation

Enclosure

cc:

Jennifer Davis, IDPH
Alpesh Patel, WCHD