



Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry
Atlanta GA 30333

April 5, 1999

Dear Resident:

The safety of children, adults, and workers who used Katy Field Recreational Area and adjoining youth center at the Naval Station Newport is an issue of great concern to a number of citizens in the Newport, Rhode Island area. This concern prompted the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to conduct an in-depth evaluation of environmental data and health information. This evaluation entitled "Health Consultation for Katy Field Recreational Area also known as Old Fire Fighter Training Area (Site 9) at the Naval Station Newport, Newport, Rhode Island" is now available. The 36 page health consultation discusses, in detail, our findings that children and adults who, in the past, played at Katy Field and the adjoining youth center are not likely to have or develop health problems from contact with the soil and sediment.

The attached sheet is a summary of our health consultation. It contains our findings, recently asked questions and answers, and ATSDR's activities at the Naval Station Newport. If you would like a copy of the health consultation sent directly to you, please call us at 1-888-42-ATSDR and request the "Naval Station Newport", Health Consultation. We will send one out promptly. Also, copies of the health consultation have been sent to the local repositories listed below and are available there for your use.

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| Newport Public Library
300 Spring Street
Newport, RI 02840
401-847-8720 | Middletown Free Library
West Main Road
Middletown, RI 02842
401-846-1573 | Portsmouth Free Public Library
2658 East Main Road
Portsmouth, RI 02871
401-683-9457 |
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ATSDR will be hosting a public availability session on Wednesday April 21, 1999 at the Middletown Town Hall from 2-5 p.m. and from 6:30-8:30 p.m. to address questions on the ATSDR health consultation or any health concerns you may have related to Katy Field.

If you have any questions before April 21, you can reach me at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 404-639-6045 or Beth Timm, our regional representative in Boston at 617-918-1493.

Sincerely,
Carole Hossom

Carole Hossom
ATSDR Site Lead
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation



Katy Field and Youth Center

Newport Naval Base, Rhode Island

January 1999

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Created by 1980 Superfund legislation, ATSDR evaluates human exposure to hazardous substances released into the environment and makes recommendations to stop or prevent such exposures to protect public health.

ATSDR's Health Message

Past Exposures: Based on all the information, including data from more than 100 soil samples, research studies, occupational studies, and epidemiological studies, and blood and urine data from other Superfund sites with similar exposures, ATSDR has determined that children and adults who played at Katy Field and the adjoining Youth Center are not likely to experience health problems from contact with the soil in those areas.

Present and Future Exposures: As a precautionary measure, the Navy installed a fence to prevent access to the area. As long as this restriction is in place, exposures cannot occur. However, levels of contaminants in the surface soils do not present a health hazard to children or adults.

Public Health Actions: With the assistance of the Navy, ATSDR will notify those people exposed to soils at Katy Field that their exposures are not likely to cause any health problems. No additional medical or public health intervention is needed. However, if you still have questions or concerns you would like to discuss with a physician, please call ATSDR directly at 1-888-42-ATSDR (1-888-422-8737).

ATSDR Activities at Newport Naval Base

In 1993, ATSDR published a *public health assessment* for the Newport Education and Training Center also known as, Newport Naval Base. A public health assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of human exposure to hazardous substances. Katy Field, located at the Old Fire Fighting Training Area, was one of the sites evaluated as part of the public health assessment. Based on one soil sample, ATSDR concluded that the exposure of children who constantly ate handfuls of soil (pica behavior) for a maximum of 5 years might be of public health concern. ATSDR recommended that day-care teachers be taught to recognize and discourage pica behavior, thus helping to reduce the exposure of these children. Additionally, ATSDR recommended that the Navy conduct further soil sampling.

In May 1998, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requested that ATSDR review soil data

from Katy Field because of EPA's concern of more intensive use of the area. After a review of all the data collected to date, ATSDR determined that chemical contaminants in the surface soil do not present a health hazard to adults or children who played daily at Katy Field. Chemicals, including arsenic, manganese, and lead are present at low levels not likely to cause any health problems. The results of ATSDR's detailed analysis will be reported in a *health consultation* that will be released in February 1999. A health consultation responds to specific requests for information about health threats related to a particular site or hazardous material.

In November 1998 and January 1999, ATSDR, along with the Navy, EPA, and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, participated with Representative Patrick Kennedy in town meetings to discuss health concerns people had about their exposures at Katy Field.

The following provides answers to questions that were commonly asked.

Will my child get sick from playing at Katy Field?

No, past exposures to contaminants at levels in the surface soil at Katy Field do not present a health hazard to anyone including infants, toddlers, young children, teenagers, parents, pregnant women, day-care center workers, day-camp workers, or lawn care workers who might have ingested soil or sediments daily. This conclusion differs slightly from ATSDR's 1993 public health assessment because much more information has become available from the large number of soil samples collected at Katy Field and because more information has become available about the dirt eating (pica) behavior of young children.

Are arsenic, manganese, or lead levels high enough in the ballfield to cause our young children to get sick?

No, contaminant levels in surface soil at Katy Field are not high enough to make anyone, including young children sick; nor are contaminant levels high enough to show up in the blood or urine of anyone who, in the past, played at Katy Field.

Should I get my child's blood and/or urine tested?

It is not necessary to get your child's blood and urine tested because the child played at Katy Field. The levels of contaminants in the surface soils are so low at Katy Field that exposure to them would not be measurable above normal levels in the blood or urine.

My child played along the shoreline. Would any chemical contaminants there make him sick?

No, chemicals in the sediment along the shoreline and chemicals in the surface soils at Katy Field are at such low levels that they do not present a health hazard.

Would the soil conditions, that is, wet or dry make a difference to my child's exposure?

No, because chemical levels are so low at Katy Field, even wet soil (which can cause some chemicals to enter the skin more easily) poses no cause for concern.

Does the "background" level of a chemical make a difference to my health?

No, it is the overall level or amount of chemical to which a person is exposed, regardless of the source, that determines whether he or she will have health problems.

If the chemical contaminant levels are safe at Katy Field, why is the Navy keeping the field closed?

While the surface soils do not present a health hazard to children or adults, contaminant levels at 5 to 6 feet below the ground surface could pose a hazard to construction workers. Therefore, levels of contaminants at depths of 5 to 6 feet might require some kind of clean-up activity as required under the Superfund Law. Clean-up investigations are scheduled to begin late in 1999. The Navy's position is that, instead of removing the fence for only a few months, it should be kept in place.

What should I do if I have additional questions or concerns?

If you have additional questions or concerns you would like to discuss with a physician, toxicologist, or health scientist please call us directly at 1-888-42-ATSDR and identify Newport Naval Base as the site of concern.

ATSDR Team Members

Beth Timm, Region I Representative
Carole Hossom, Environmental Health Scientist
Dr. Buck Grissom, Toxicologist
Sandee Coulberson, Community Relations Specialist
Louise House, Region I Senior Representative
Dr. Robert Johnson, Family Medicine Physician
Brian Kaplan, Environmental Health Scientist

For More Information

Your questions and comments are important to ATSDR and can be directed to Beth Timm, ATSDR Regional Representative, at 617-918-1493. You can also contact our Atlanta office, toll free, at 1-888-42-ATSDR (1-888-422-8737). Please refer to the "Newport Naval Base" when asking to speak with a health assessor or Dr. Robert Johnson in the Division of Health Assessment and Consultation.