

Public health information

Former Domtar Site: Soil sampling results and health risk assessment

Soil sampling results

The Alberta government is releasing comprehensive surface and sub-surface soil data along with a human health risk assessment of soil contamination in the former Domtar wood treatment facility and surrounding neighbourhoods.

To read these technical reports in their entirety, please visit www.alberta.ca/Domtar

Human health risk assessment

A human health risk assessment has been completed, based on the extensive soil sampling that has been done in the area, to determine what health risks are associated with the level of contamination found.

This assessment confirms there are hazards to human health in the soil, but these can continue to be addressed through the protective measures put in place last year to limit exposure, including fencing and dust control.

The main human health risk was found to be the presence of dioxins and furans, some of which are at levels considerably higher than what is acceptable. The highest levels of health risk were identified in areas that have already been fenced off.

Because of installed fencing, dust controls and current snow cover, there is little risk of exposure. Residents should continue to stay out of fenced-off areas.

In light of the human health risk assessment, the Alberta government will be considering more permanent exposure controls in the area.

Community health

Based on requests from residents, Alberta Health has also done a preliminary comparison of the rates of cancer, miscarriages and birth defects in the surrounding neighbourhoods. This initial analysis found no difference between rates in the area near the former Domtar site compared to other parts of the province, with the exception of three types of cancer.

No differences in any childhood cancers were found compared to other parts of the province.

Among people who had lived in the area for 10 or more years, there were:

- 34 cases of breast cancer in women (16 to 31 cases would have been expected)
- 14 cases of endometrial cancer in women (3 to 9 cases would have been expected)
- 22 cases of lung cancer in men (6 to 14 cases would have been expected)

This data on its own does not indicate why there are higher rates for these three types of cancer. Many factors could contribute to an increased risk of cancer, including medical history, certain medication usage and tobacco use.

Alberta Health will be working immediately with federal experts to conduct a field epidemiology investigation to understand more about the population health factors that might have contributed to higher rates of these three cancers.

Precautions for residents

There is no additional precautionary action recommended for residents with respect to prevention of endometrial or lung cancer, other than general good health practices, including:

- healthy eating
- regular exercise
- stopping tobacco use
- maintaining a connection to a single primary health care provider who can monitor your health over time

As a precautionary measure, until more is known from the epidemiology investigation, women who have lived in this area for 10 or more years should talk to their doctors about the risks and benefits of starting breast cancer screening at the age of 40.

It may also be helpful for residents to tell their doctor or primary health care provider about the increased rates of these three conditions for those who have lived in the area for 10 or more years. Your doctor can then take this information into account for your individual care plan based on your medical history and situation.

For individual health concerns or to discuss early breast cancer screening, residents are encouraged to contact their doctor.

We encourage you to bring this information sheet into your next appointment to help support your conversation with your doctor.

Those who do not have a family doctor can call Health Link (811) at any time to find doctors in the area accepting new patients.

Next steps and remediation

Residents and former residents will be contacted about the start of the field epidemiology investigation, with more information on how to participate.

Remediation on areas of specific concern will begin once ground conditions improve in the spring.

Community information sessions

The Alberta government and Alberta Health Services are organizing two community information sessions to answer any questions you may have about soil sampling results, the human health risk assessment and findings from the preliminary health outcomes analysis.

Location:

Clareview Recreation Centre
3804-139 Ave. NW

Dates:

- March 9, 5 to 8 p.m. Multipurpose Room 2
- March 14, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Multipurpose Room 3

Resources and supports

All information related to Domtar site soil sampling and remediation plans can be found at alberta.ca/Domtar

On March 7, 2019, the following documents will be available:

- all available surface and sub-surface sampling data, including maps indicating where exceedances were found;
- the human health risk assessment and executive summary.

If you believe you are a potentially affected landowner, and you wish to request a meeting with the Director to discuss any concerns about the site assessment reports, or the status of remedial measures at the site, please contact the information center using the contact information below, or email Angela Brown, Environmental Protection Officer, at angela.L.brown@gov.ab.ca

Residents can also contact the Environment and Parks information centre:

- Call toll-free at 310-3773
- Email AEP.Info-Centre@gov.ab.ca