

Community Information

on the

Miami Civic Center Property Hazardous Waste Site

Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida



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Florida Department of Health Finds Site Is an Indeterminate Public Health Hazard

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) investigated chemicals in the soil at the Miami Civic Center Property. The fenced site, approximately three acres, is at 1700 NW 14th Avenue in Miami. The Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) sampled the soil at the site to determine whether chemicals there might pose a public health threat. The Miami-Dade DERM asked the Florida DOH to review the sampling results. DOH looks for expected health effects, if any, from the types and amounts of chemicals at a site.

DOH finds that, **as long as no one goes onto the site and no one disturbs the soil, it does not expect to see any adverse health effects.**

However, DOH found arsenic, cadmium, and lead in the site's soil in amounts that might pose a health risk. These chemicals cannot cause harm unless they come in contact with people. Miami-Dade County has fenced off the site to keep people from going onto it. In addition, there is good ground cover over the site, grasses and vegetation, keeping down any dust.

DOH is concerned for public health if anyone is going onto the property or the soil is disturbed in the future without adequate protections.

If someone disturbs the soil it could get into the air in the form of dust. People breathing arsenic and cadmium contaminated dust from this site long-term (30-years) could have an increased risk of lung and/or prostate cancer.

As dust, people could breathe the arsenic and cadmium, or get it on their lips or hands. This is most important for children. They put their hands in or around their mouths more often than adults do. This means they probably would "accidentally eat" more of the soil. Some of the ways that people can accidentally eat contaminated soil are licking their lips after being exposed to contaminated dust, or handling food without washing their hands. Children also are more at risk than adults are because they are shorter and smaller. Because they are short, they might breathe more dust. Because they are small, the amount of chemical they might get in their body would be a larger dose for them than for an adult.

Residents should stay off the site and keep children off of it. DOH recommends that if anyone plans to work on the site in a way that will disturb the soil, they should first contact Wilbur Mayorga at the Miami-Dade DERM, 305-372-6700.

What can you do?

- If you notice the soil is being disturbed you can call Samir Elmir, Environmental

Health Director for Miami-Dade County. His telephone number is 305-623-3500.

- If you see children going onto the site, you can tell them about the hazard, ask them to leave, and tell their parents about the hazard.
- You can be sure your neighbors and friends in the community are informed.



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The Site's Background

This property has been unused since 1986. From the 1930s until around 1986, there were residences there. There was a plant nursery on the northwest portion from around 1949 until around 1986.

Environmental agencies assessing the property found debris such as concrete, glass, charcoal, and metal. Later sampling found a layer of ash on the eastern portion of the property. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) thinks that in the past this ash could have come from an incinerator that was located a few blocks away from the site. The Miami-Dade DERM was concerned and asked the Florida DOH to look at what had been found. The full findings of that assessment are in the DOH report, a Health Consultation. This fact sheet you are reading summarizes the Health Consultation report.

Chemicals of Concern

So far, DERM has tested for arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, mercury, nickel, silver, and zinc. Of these, only arsenic, cadmium, and lead have been found at levels that could possibly cause health effects. DOH wants to know if other chemicals associated with incinerator wastes are present. These would include dibenzodioxins and dibenzofurans. Until more information is available, the Florida DOH classifies this site as an indeterminate public health hazard.

Recommendations

- **DOH recommends that DERM should do additional sampling**, to check for other chemical substances associated with incinerator wastes.
- DOH also recommends that, until environmental agencies have cleaned up the site, **people should stay off of it and report any activity there** that disturbs the soil.

You can get a copy of the DOH Health Consultation report at the Civic Center Library, in the Metrorail Civic Center Station; the Culmer/Overtown Branch Library, 305 NW 13th Street; and at the Main Library at 101 West Flagler Street, Miami. You also may call Beth Copeland at DOH toll free during business hours at 1-877-798-2772.

What the Florida DOH and ATSDR do.

- Seek out the concerns and questions of the affected community and respond to them,
- Conduct evaluations of potential health effects, if any, at a hazardous waste site,
- Advise the public on how to protect themselves from future exposure to site chemicals,
- Inform communities of our findings and recommendations concerning the site,
- Inform the community's healthcare professionals of our findings, and give them information,
- Do biological exposure investigations, if indicated, and
- Advise cleanup and other agencies on health issues.

What the Florida DOH and ATSDR do NOT do.

- We do not make or enforce laws or rules concerning hazardous waste.
- We do not provide medical services.
- We do not provide funds for cleanup or relocating people.
- We usually do not take samples, using those taken by agencies funded to do that work.
- We do not do worker investigations.

For Health Questions:

Beth Copeland, Community Education or
Shaun Crawford, Health Scientist
Superfund Health Assessment & Education Section
Bureau of Environmental Epidemiology
Florida Department of Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin #A-08
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1712
850-245-4299 or Toll Free 1-877-798-2772

For Site Cleanup Questions:

Wilbur Mayorga, PE
Miami-Dade County Department of
Environmental Resources Management (DERM)
305-372-6700