

Community Update

April 2006

Mulberry, Florida

Florida DOH Drafts Health Consultation Report for the Fuller Heights Community

About the Florida DOH and ATSDR

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) reviews environmental sampling taken from hazardous waste sites where chemicals have gotten into the air, soil, or water. The Florida DOH has a cooperative agreement with the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to determine the health risk for nearby residents.

About the Site

The Fuller Heights community is about one and one-half miles west of Mulberry in Polk County. There are about 40 homes in the area. It is across Old Highway 60 from a chemical plant that discharged wastewater in two mining pits and a drainfield. Cleanup of the property is going on now under Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) supervision.

In 2004, the chemical plant told DEP that wastewater from the two mining pits, had overflowed along an area north of the Fuller Heights community. To see if there had been any effects on area drinking water wells, DEP and the Polk County Health Department (CHD) began to sample the wells on a routine basis.

In August 2005, the Polk CHD asked the Florida DOH to review Fuller Heights community private well water test results. In some of the wells, levels of arsenic, nitrates, radium 226/228, and thallium exceed drinking water standards. DEP is now looking to see how far these chemicals may have spread and where it came from.

At a public meeting last summer, Fuller Heights residents were concerned about the quality of water from their private wells. DEP has put on filters at homes with wells that do not meet drinking water standards. As long as DEP keeps the filters on these wells, the health of people living in the area will not be harmed. For those homes with filters, drinking unfiltered water could increase the risk of illness from nitrates and arsenic. DEP and Polk County are also working to connect the community to the public water supply.

Currently, the Fuller Heights site is a “no apparent health hazard”
if people in homes with filters drink only filtered water.
In the future, it could be a health hazard if people in homes with filters
drink unfiltered water.

Children, especially babies, in homes with filters should not drink unfiltered water.

In the past, the water might have been a health hazard;
past levels of chemicals in the drinking water are unknown.

Learn more at the Fuller Heights Community Meeting:

**Mt. Shiloh Church
on Old Highway 60 at Ave A
Mulberry, Florida**

Thursday, May 4, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Conclusions of the Report

The most important things to do to protect public health in the area are to make sure to find any wells with chemicals above drinking water standards and put filters on them.

1. *Past* exposures in Fuller Heights are a public health hazard if levels of chemicals were the same as the current highest levels for 30 years. However, we do not have data on private well samples prior to 2004. Florida DOH does not know the source of the chemicals, so cannot tell if the levels of those chemicals have changed very much through time or not. Levels in the past could have been higher or lower than they are now.
2. *Current* exposures are a no apparent public health hazard for people that drink well water that has passed through a filter. DEP has put in and kept up proper filters on all homes with wells with chemicals above drinking water standards. There is no health risk for anyone who drinks well water that has passed through a filter. This is also true if someone drinks well water that has not gone through a filter but does not have any chemicals in it. However, if people whose homes have wells with the highest nitrate and arsenic levels choose to bypass their filters and still drink the water, then their health may be at risk. To limit this risk, DEP is testing the water each quarter. People in homes with filters should not drink unfiltered water. DEP and the county are also working to connect those homes to public water.
3. *Future* exposures are a public health hazard for people who are drinking well water that has not passed through a filter. Not all of the wells in the Fuller Heights area have chemicals in them. DEP has installed filters for those wells. If the chemicals get into wells that do not have filters on them at the highest arsenic and nitrate levels, there is a health risk for people who might drink the water. That is why DEP is testing the wells each quarter for chemicals and puts filters on wells with chemicals found in them.
4. DEP has put filters in homes that have wells with arsenic and nitrate levels that exceed safe drinking water standards. To keep people from coming into contact with these chemicals now or in the future, these filters should be used. With the filters in place and working properly, people will not come into contact with these chemicals. Thus, it is not likely people will have any health effects from drinking the water at the highest chemical levels found. To keep babies safe from methemoglobinemia (or "blue baby syndrome" which is caused by drinking water with too much nitrate in it), infant formula should be made with water from any of the area wells only water that has passed through a filter.

Please take a few minutes to fill out the attached form, giving us your ideas and concerns.

You may have the report mailed to you by calling (877) 798-2772

Or see the report online at:

www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/pha.htm

and scroll down to Fuller Heights Health Consultation

You can submit comments online or mail them.

We want your comments!

**Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Community Environmental Health
4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin #A08, Tallahassee, FL 32399-1712**

Recommendations

1. Continue to check area wells. The Florida DEP is testing wells each quarter to see if any of them have levels of chemicals that exceed standards.
2. Put in and keep up filters for wells with arsenic and nitrate levels above the standards. DEP has been doing this to avoid any health risk.
3. Parents should not let their children drink well water that has not passed through a filter if it has arsenic or nitrate levels above the standards.
4. Pregnant women (30th week) should not drink well water that has not passed through a filter if it has nitrate levels are greater than 10,000 ppb. Infants less than six months old (especially those less than 4 months old) should also not drink such well water. Do not make baby formula with well water that has not passed through a filter if nitrate levels are greater than 10,000 ppb.

Future Plans

- DEP will test private wells in Fuller Heights each quarter for arsenic, nitrates, and thallium. Homes that use private wells that have levels above the standards will be fitted with the proper filter based on the kind of chemical found in the well.
- DEP and the county are working to hook up people living in Fuller Heights to the public water supply.
- DOH will tell people who live in Fuller Heights about the findings in this report with this mail out and the public meeting.
- DOH, Bureau of Community Environmental Health staff will look at any more test results they get from DEP or the Polk CHD.

What DOH Does:

- ✓ *We conduct public health assessments.*
- ✓ *We conduct exposure investigations.*
- ✓ *We inform and educate communities and healthcare providers.*
- ✓ *We focus on health.*



Comments and Questions

Concerning the Fuller Heights community, Mulberry, Florida

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|--|------------|---------------|-------------|-----------|
| 1. This fact sheet was clear. | Yes | Mostly | Some | No |
| 2. Florida Department of Health (DOH) told me about the chemicals it found at the Fuller Heights site. | Yes | Mostly | Some | No |
| 3. I now know that at least one of the chemicals on this site was found at elevated levels. | Yes | Mostly | Some | No |
| 4. I now know what part DOH plays at the site. | Yes | Mostly | Some | No |
| 5. I now know at least two ways to avoid the chemicals at this site. | Yes | Mostly | Some | No |

My health concerns are _____

Optional (So we can contact you to answer your questions)

Name: _____ Phone (____) _____

Address: _____ Mulberry, FL (Zip code) _____

Mail to:

Attention: Elise Waltman
 Florida Department of Health
 Bureau of Community
 Environmental Health
 4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A08
 Tallahassee, FL 32399-1712