

Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP)

FAST FACTS

ATI Wah Chang site Public Health Assessment

Background

Since 1956, the plant now owned by ATI Wah Chang has operated as a rare metals extraction facility. Metals produced there have included zirconium, hafnium, tantalum and niobium. The production process for these radioactive products has historically generated radioactive wastes and introduced them into the environment. Other wastes that the plant has released into the environment include volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals.

ATI Wah Chang was listed as a Superfund site in 1983. Under the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Wah Chang completed clean-up actions and extensive environmental sampling from 1983 to 2002 as part of the Superfund process. The Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP) used these data to assess the public health implications of exposure to contaminants from the site.

Findings

- Contaminants in soil, surface water and groundwater within the plant itself pose no public health hazard because the general public does not come into contact with them.
- Exposure to surface water from Second Lake poses no apparent public health hazard. Contaminants measured in Second Lake were below levels that would be expected to cause health effects.
- Eating fish from Second Lake is an indeterminate public health hazard because fish from the lake have never been tested for contaminants from Wah Chang.
- Exposure to soil from the soil amendment area (see map on back) poses no apparent public health hazard because levels of radiation and radionuclides are below health-based standards.

We recommend that Wah Chang:

- ✓ Test fish from Second Lake and the Willamette River using a sampling and analysis plan approved by the EPA, EHAP and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ);
- ✓ Educate the public about the importance of not eating fish from Second Lake until Wah Chang has collected more data;
- ✓ Continue to maintain perimeter fencing, monitoring programs and security measures that prevent public access to areas within the Wah Chang plant;
- ✓ Notify EHAP if changes in Wah Chang's operations cause parts of the plant, Truax Creek or Murder Creek to become accessible to the general public.

We recommend that the public:

- ✓ Refrain from eating fish caught from Second Lake or from the Willamette River near the confluence with Second Lake until Wah Chang provides the results of further fish tissue sampling to EHAP, which will release that information to the public;
- ✓ Do not drink water from or swim in Second Lake.

For more information about this health consultation, please e-mail David Farrer at ehap.info@state.or.us or call him at 971-673-0971.

The Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP)

EHAP's goal is to assess and prevent exposure to toxic substances present in Oregon's environment. We examine the health risks related to toxic exposures and educate the community on how to reduce or prevent these exposures. After EHAP conducts a health assessment or health consultation, we inform communities near the site about our findings. If there is a health threat, we inform communities right away.

Aerial map of ATI Wah Chang site

