Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry – Fact Sheet

Agency Role/Mission.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a federal public health agency located in Atlanta, Georgia. It is part of the Public Health Service within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Created by Superfund legislation in 1980, ATSDR’s mission is to prevent or mitigate adverse human health effects and diminished quality of life resulting from exposure to hazardous substances in the environment.

Responsibilities and Capabilities. To carry out its mission and to serve the needs of the American public, ATSDR conducts activities in the following areas:

- **Public Health Assessments.** Evaluate data and information on the release of hazardous substances into the environment to assess any current or future impact on public health, develop health advisories or other health recommendations, and identify studies or actions needed to evaluate and mitigate or prevent human health effects. ATSDR conducts health assessments for all waste sites on the National Priorities List and in response to petitions from concerned individuals and organizations.

- **Health Investigations.** Increase our understanding of the relationship between exposure to hazardous substances and adverse human health effects, through epidemiologic, surveillance, and other studies of toxic substances and their effects.

- **Exposure and Disease Registry.** Establish and maintain a registry of persons exposed to hazardous substances and a registry of serious diseases and illnesses in persons exposed to hazardous substances in the environment.

- **Emergency Response.** Provide health-related support to states, local agencies, and health care providers in public health emergencies involving exposure to hazardous substances, including health consultations on request and training for first responders.

- **Toxicological Profiles.** Summarize and make available to the public, data on the health effects of hazardous substances, identify significant gaps in knowledge, and initiate research in toxicology and health effects where needed.

- **Health Education.** Develop and disseminate to physicians and other health care providers materials on the health effects of toxic substances, establish and maintain a publicly accessible inventory of hazardous substances, and maintain a list of sites closed or restricted to the public because of hazardous substance contamination.

- **Applied Research.** Conduct or sponsor research to increase scientific knowledge about the effects on human health of hazardous substances released from waste sites or of other releases into the environment.