

## **Colorado Cooperative Program for Environmental Health Assessments (CCPEHA) at CDPHE**

When consulted about environmental contamination at a site, CCPEHA evaluates the quantitative data from samples gathered from other agencies and divisions of CDPHE and performs human health risk assessments in accordance with CDPHE, EPA, and ATSDR guidelines. The various CCPEHA risk assessment products and other activities are listed below:

### **Public Health Assessment or Health Consultation**

Either document entails a broad look at an entire hazardous waste site – the soil, water, and air. Both types of reports consider all of the potential health effects from all chemicals at the site by performing health risk assessment. Health risk assessments may consider

- the levels (or "concentrations") of hazardous substances
- if and how people might be exposed to contamination (through "exposure pathways" such as breathing air, drinking or contacting water, contacting or eating soil, or eating food)
- the harm the substances might cause to people (or the contaminants' "toxicity")
- if and how working or living nearby might affect people's health
- other dangers to people, such as unsafe buildings, abandoned mine shafts, or other physical hazards.

The aim of a CCPEHA health risk assessment is to find out if people are being exposed to hazardous substances and, if so, whether that exposure is harmful and should be stopped. Both a public health assessment and a health consultation present conclusions about the public health threat, if any, posed by a site. These conclusions will highlight any health threats that have been determined for high-risk groups (e.g., children, pregnant women, and the elderly). Recommendations are then presented on how to stop or reduce exposure. The public health action plan section of the report describes how the recommendation will be implemented. For example, CCPEHA recommendations can contribute to:

- site cleanup
- keeping people away from contamination and physical dangers-for example, by fencing the site
- giving residents acceptable drinking water
- community environmental health education for residents and health care providers to inform them about site contaminants, harmful health effects, and ways to reduce or prevent health effects
- a health study

A CCPEHA health consultation is not the same thing as a medical exam, a community health study, or a Public Health Assessment. It can sometimes lead to those things, as well as to other public health activities.

### **Technical Assist**

For well-defined problems or questions, CCPEHA can provide quick assistance on environmental health issues (e.g., Literature search on health effects of chemicals , etc). the results of this technical assistance can be provided in the form of a email or fact sheet.

### **What is ATSDR Role in the Health Assessment or Health Consultation Process?**

- ATSDR review and approves all health assessment and health consultation reports. Only the ATSDR published health assessment and health consultation reports are released for use by the general public and other agencies.
- ATSDR is primarily an advisory agency. Therefore, its reports usually identify what actions are appropriate to be undertaken by EPA, other responsible parties, or the research or education divisions of ATSDR.
- If there is an urgent health threat, ATSDR can issue a public health advisory warning people of the danger.
- ATSDR can also authorize health education or pilot studies of health effects, full scale epidemiology studies, exposure registries, surveillance studies or research on specific hazardous substances

### **Health Education Activities**

CCPEHA may also conduct two types of public health education activities:

- Health Education not related to a contaminated site. CCPEHA can provide health educated related to current environmental issues (e.g., Lead In Toys, Pharmaceutical in the Environment, indoor air issues in schools and homes, and pesticides)
- Health education intended to address site-specific issues. CCPEHA health educators may seek out the concerns and questions of residents of the community in relation to general environmental health issues as well as site-specific issues. Health educators may then advise the public on how to protect themselves from future exposure to chemicals at a site. For example, CCPEHA may:
  - inform communities of our findings and recommendations concerning the site.
  - inform the community's healthcare professionals about our findings, and give them helpful materials.
  - advise cleanup agencies on health issues.

### **What We Cannot Do**

- CCPEHA does not make or enforce laws or rules concerning hazardous waste.
- CCPEHA does not provide medical services.
- CCPEHA does not provide funds for cleanup or relocating people.
- CCPEHA does not take environmental or biological samples.
- CCPEHA does not do worker investigations.
- CCPEHA does not do epidemiological exposure investigation of communities by collecting biological samples.

### **For More Information, please contact:**

Dr. Raj Goyal

Program Manager/Principal Investigator

303-692-2634

[Raj.Goyal@state.co.us](mailto:Raj.Goyal@state.co.us)

