

Guam DPH&SS, Guam EPA, and ATSDR investigate health concerns from eating contaminated fish caught near Orote Landfill



Guam Department
of Public Health
and Social Services



Guam
Environmental
Protection Agency

ATSDR
Agency for Toxic
Substances and
Disease Registry



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Guam EPA and Guam Public Health heading off future problems at Orote Point

The Navy, Guam Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPH&SS, known as “Guam Public Health”), and other regulatory agencies have issued news releases, conducted public informational meetings, and posted a seafood consumption advisory because recent sampling of fish tissue from fish caught near the Orote Landfill Site revealed that some fish had elevated levels of PCBs and other chemicals. Until more information is known, the Navy, Guam EPA and Guam Public Health are warning people not to consume any seafood (e.g., fish, octopus, seaweed, crabs, lobsters, and other shellfish) caught in the area from Orote Point to Nimitz Beach (the in-shore, reef edge to shore area). The warning area covers approximately 2.5 by 8 miles. In November, the Navy collected and tested more fish from the advisory zone to determine the extent of the contamination problem.

The Orote Landfill Site occupies approximately 9.4 acres of land within U.S. Naval Forces, Marianas Islands, on the southern portion of the Orote Peninsula. The Orote Landfill was used for disposal of residential, industrial, and construction wastes from approximately 1944 to 1969. The face of the cliff that partially borders the landfill was reportedly the most active disposal area. Flammable material was burned, and the ashes were buried on the cliff above the nearby cove. Nonflammable material was buried behind the cliff or bulldozed over the cliff onto the beach. The landfill was capped and a seawall built to stop the landfill from eroding away.

Here is how ATSDR is assisting with public health assessment activities

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) joins forces with Guam EPA and Guam Public Health to investigate community exposure to chemical contamination in fish caught in the seafood advisory area. ATSDR is involved in the following public health activities:

- *Review of Navy Supplemental Fish Sampling Plan* - In November, ATSDR provided input into the number and type of fish to be sampled and the chemical analysis needed to make a health determination.
- *Review of Navy Fish Consumption Survey* - In November, ATSDR’s comments focused on using pictures, diagrams, and maps to identify fish types and fishing locations. ATSDR also recommended that the survey be administered face-to-face by an interviewer and that translators be available.
- *Development and Distribution of Frequently Asked Questions on PCB Contamination*. - In December, ATSDR issued a fact sheet addressing questions and concerns related to PCB exposure, including health effects, medical testing, and fish consumption and preparation.

What will happen next?

- *Development and Distribution of Public Health Findings Fact Sheet* - In November, ATSDR

reviewed the Navy's preliminary fish sampling data. In January 2002, ATSDR will issue a fact sheet of recommendations based on that data.

- *Grand Rounds* - Guam Public Health and ATSDR will work with Guam Memorial Hospital to sponsor a continuing medical education training session in early 2002. Local physicians and health care professionals will be provided continuing education on methods for evaluation of PCBs and other chemicals.
- *Meet with the Community* - Guam Public Health, Guam EPA, and ATSDR will host a public availability session in early 2002 to give the community an opportunity to ask questions and express concerns related to the Orote Landfill Site.
- *Attend a Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting* - ATSDR will attend a RAB meeting in early 2002 and listen to issues and concerns raised by Board members about the Orote Landfill Site. ATSDR, Guam Public Health, and Guam EPA will provide updates to the community as information becomes available to protect residents from further exposure to contamination.

Other Agency Contacts

Guam Dept. of Public Health and Social Services
Robert Haddock, DVM, Territorial Epidemiologist
(671)735-7299

Guam Environmental Protection Agency
Conchita S.N. Taitano, Project Manager
(671) 475-1658/59, guamepa@mail.gov.gu
Walter S. Leon Guerrero, Team Member
(671) 475-1644, walterlg@mail.gov.gu
Grace O. Garces, Public Information Officer
(671) 475-1623, gogarces@mail.gov.gu

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Wolfram, Superfund BRAC (415) 972-3027,
wolfram.michael@epamail.gov
Dan Stralka, (415) 972-3048,
stralka.daniel@epa.gov

U.S. Naval Forces Marianas
Lt. Monica Richardson, Public Affairs Officer
(671) 339-5207

About ATSDR and How to Contact the Agency

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry is a federal public health service agency. Created by the 1980 Superfund Legislation, ATSDR evaluates human exposure to hazardous substances in the environment and makes recommendations to prevent or minimize such exposure to protect the public's health.

You can call ATSDR toll-free at:

1-888-42ATSDR (888-422-8737)

The ATSDR contact for activities at Orote Landfill is Monica Booker 404-498-0377 or via email at mbooker@cdc.gov.

More information about ATSDR can be found on the agency's website at www.atsdr.cdc.gov

ATSDR

Monica Booker & Charles Grosse, ATSDR Health Assessors (404) 498-0108 or **toll-free** 1-888-422-8737 (Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm, EST)

Gwen Eng, Regional Representative
San Francisco, California (415) 947-4317

LaFreta Dalton and Maria Teran-MacIver, ATSDR Community Involvement Specialists
(404) 498-1740 or **toll-free** 1-888-422-8737 (Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm, EST). When calling the ATSDR toll-free telephone number, please mention that you wish to discuss the Orote Landfill Site.