

Who We Are

Environmental Epidemiology is responsible for environmental public health activities that relate to chemical exposures and pollution in Tennessee.

Our Federal Partners

Environmental Epidemiology is funded through Cooperative Agreements with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). ATSDR is the federal public health agency whose mission is to prevent exposure and adverse human health effects and diminished quality of life associated with exposure to hazardous substances from waste sites, unplanned releases, and other sources of pollution in the environment. ATSDR describes many environmental health topics on its website (www.ATSDR.cdc.gov). Environmental Epidemiology is also supported by the National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH), a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Our Other Partners

Environmental Epidemiology works with other federal, state, and local agencies including:

- US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) www.epa.gov
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) www.cdc.gov
- Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) www.tdec.net
- State, County, and Metropolitan Health Departments



Communicable & Environmental Disease Services

Environmental Epidemiology Program

1st Floor Cordell Hull Building
425 5th Avenue North
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

1.800.404.3006
615.741.7247

www.tennessee.gov/health/environmental
EEP.health@tn.gov



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Superfund
cleanup
toxins
Community
pollution
CHEMICALS
PESTICIDES
radiation
**Protecting
Environmental
Public Health
in Tennessee**



Tennessee Department of Health
Environmental Epidemiology Program

Environmental Health Investigations

Environmental Epidemiology investigates sites where people may be at risk of chemical exposure and takes action to make sure people are safe. An investigation may include these steps:

1. Investigate ways people might come into contact with chemicals whether in air, water, soil, or biota,
2. Review environmental data,
3. Determine if people are being dangerously exposed,
4. Calculate the risks to public health,
5. Provide recommendations to eliminate hazardous exposures, thus keeping people safe, or
6. Develop a public health action plan to perform any necessary changes, cleanups, or educational needs.

Toxic Substance Incidents Surveillance

Under the National Toxic Substance Incidents Program Cooperative Agreement with ATSDR, Environmental Epidemiology is notified of acute releases of toxic substances that occur in Tennessee. We use these notifications to:

1. Describe release incidents and their public health consequences,
2. Identify and prioritize vulnerabilities in industry, transportation, and communities as they relate to toxic substance releases, and

3. Identify, develop, and promote strategies that could prevent ongoing and future exposures and resultant health effects from toxic substance releases.

Keeping People Safe Helping Communities

Environmental Epidemiology works to keep people safe from hazardous chemicals and to help them live in wholesome environments that promote healthy lifestyles and mitigate climate change. Examples of actions performed include:

- Determining the level of public health hazard posed by Superfund and other hazardous waste sites,
- Visiting communities to hear their environmental concerns,
- Working with other government agencies, community groups, and concerned citizens to safely redevelop Brownfield sites,
- Recommending actions that need to be taken to safeguard public health,
- Studying the health of communities exposed to environmental hazards,
- Educating health care professionals and the general public about how to minimize exposure to hazardous substances,
- Educating the public about the health benefits of responding to climate change, or
- Partnering with government and other agencies to promote healthy sustainable communities.

Can EEP Make or Enforce Regulations?

No. The Tennessee Department of Health's Environmental Epidemiology Program is not an environmental regulatory agency. When actions are needed to keep people safe, we provide advice and recommendations to other agencies including TDEC and EPA. Examples of recommendations are connecting homes to a community water supply or restricting access to a hazardous area.

Environmental Sampling

Environmental Epidemiology does not collect environmental samples but often interprets environmental sampling data of air, water, soil, or biota for other agencies. As part of a health investigation, we can recommend that TDEC or EPA collect environmental samples. Guidelines on how to collect samples must be followed to assure quality and to be upheld in a court of law.

