



NEWS RELEASE



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State Begins Environmental Investigation in Kettleman City

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Yesterday, the California Environmental Protection Agency began its environmental testing of the soil, water and air in Kettleman City. State officials are going door-to-door notifying residents of activities that will happen during the next 10 weeks.

“This is a matter of urgency for our agency and the people of Kettleman City, and we want to expedite our investigation into potential environmental exposures in this City,” said Secretary for Environmental Protection Linda Adams. “We remain committed to the people of Kettleman City and our investigation.”

Scientists from the Air Resources Board, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment and the State Water Resources Control Board are participating in the environmental investigation and plan to:

- **TEST THE AIR:** Analyze air samples for metals, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), sulfur dioxide, polychlorinated biphenyls, dioxins, and furans – many of which can cause developmental effects. Scientists will also assess community exposure to diesel exhaust. Sampling will occur at the Kettleman City Elementary School and two locations near the Kettleman Hills Hazardous Waste Facility,
- **SAMPLE THE SOIL:** Test the soil for volatile organic compounds and other chemicals that may cause birth defects. Sample the aqueduct and irrigation canal sediment. Examine potential sources of chemicals from present and past activities in the city including, agricultural operations, illegal dump sites, naturally occurring hazardous chemicals such as arsenic, as well as industrial and legacy petroleum pollution.
- **ANALYZE THE WATER:** Sample water in local wells and residences for arsenic, benzene and other hazardous chemicals.
- **PROBE PESTICIDE USE:** Evaluate potential health risks from pesticides applied in the area. Research past use of pesticides near residents. Use computer modeling to estimate pesticide exposures in the community and monitor for certain pesticides.

During the next ten weeks, residents may see scientists with specialized clothing and equipment. They will have clear and visible identification at all times. They may also need to work with local residents to obtain access to their property or adjacent property.

“We really appreciate the community’s cooperation at this time. Our purpose is to test the soil, water and air to determine if residents are exposed to environmental contaminants in Kettleman City,” said Dr. Joan Denton, lead scientist of the team and Director of the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment.

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Although the investigation may not uncover a single, definite reason for the reported birth defects, it will provide a full catalogue of the community's potential environmental exposures.

"We don't know if we'll be able to find an environmental cause of these problems, but the work Cal/EPA and DPH does in Kettleman City represents our best hope at providing answers to a community that deserves them," said Secretary Adams.

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) continues to work in partnership with Cal-EPA as it investigates possible environmental hazards present in the community. CDPH also has completed interviews with six Kettleman City families who had children born with birth defects and who agreed to participate in the survey process. For the interviews, CDPH has used a multi-page questionnaire that is thorough and exhaustive in its examination. While much of the information is personal and will remain private, the Department will release a summary of the information collected in the early fall.

A draft report is expected in the fall, followed by a comment period and community meeting. The final report should be available by the end of the year. Cal/EPA is committed to a transparent process and will keep the community informed along the way.

This effort is in response to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger's request that the California Department of Public Health and Cal/EPA take aggressive action to investigate birth defects reported in Kettleman City. The departments are coordinating their investigative efforts.

Copies of Cal/EPA's workplan have been provided to the local Post Office, Library and Elementary School in Kettleman City.

For the complete technical document, please visit <http://www.calepa.ca.gov/EnvJustice/News/>.

The California Environmental Protection Agency is charged with developing, implementing and enforcing the state's environmental protection laws that ensure clean air, clean water, clean soil, safe pesticides and waste recycling and reduction. Our departments are at the forefront of environmental science, using cutting-edge research to shape the state's environmental laws.

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