

**DEC 11 2009**

Jessica Pepper
iRock Inc.
1004 W. Doolin
Blackwell, Oklahoma 74631

Dear Ms. Pepper:

Thank you for your November 17, 2009, letter to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) regarding your concerns that the residents of Blackwell, Oklahoma, could be exposed to heavy metal contamination in the environment due to the Blackwell Zinc Superfund Site. As a result of the heavy metals present in the environment, you requested that ATSDR consider conducting a public health assessment for your community. This letter is sent to provide information about ATSDR's Petition Program and describe how your request will be addressed.

Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), Congress provided ATSDR with the authority to conduct public health assessment activities to determine whether people have been, or are currently being exposed to hazardous substances released into the environment from a hazardous waste site or facility. ATSDR then evaluates whether the exposure is harmful, or potentially harmful, and should therefore be stopped or reduced. This evaluation is based on the available environmental monitoring data typically gathered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the state environmental regulatory agency. It is important to note that ATSDR does not conduct the environmental sampling which is necessary to perform this type of evaluation. It is also important to note that ATSDR's public health assessment activities are not able to determine the cause of an individual's disease, determine the cause of an increased incidence of a disease in a community, or determine whether a particular exposure caused a disease or increased incidence of a disease.

As we review your request, we will work with the relevant state and federal agencies to gather the available environmental sampling data related to your specific concern. Once we have gathered this information, we will review it to determine if the data is of sufficient quantity and quality to evaluate whether the community is exposed to harmful levels of environmental contaminants released from the site. After the review is complete, we will send you a second letter to describe the information we reviewed and to advise you as to whether additional public health assessment activities will be appropriate to address your concern.

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Thank you for forwarding your concerns to ATSDR. If you have any additional questions regarding ATSDR's process to review this petition request please contact CAPT Susan Neurath, ATSDR Petition Coordinator, at (770) 488-3368 or email at SNeurath@cdc.gov.

Sincerely,



William Cibulas Jr., Ph.D.
CAPT, U.S. Public Health Service
Director
Division of Health Assessment and Consultation

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