

# ***Altha School Information***

October 2006

Calhoun County, Florida

## **Florida DOH/ATSDR Health Consultation Report for the Altha School *Now Available***

### ***About Florida DOH and ATSDR***

The Florida Department of Health (DOH) reviews environmental sampling taken from sites where chemicals have gotten into the air, soil, or water. As part of this process, we work closely with county health departments (CHD). The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) funds this program to determine any health risk at these sites. DOH reviews sample data from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

*Indoor air tested at Altha School is unlikely to cause anyone to become ill.  
The air poses “no apparent public health hazard.”*

### ***About Air Testing at Altha School***

Several gasoline and fuel oil underground storage tanks were removed from the Altha School grounds in 1989, 1990, and 1991. More recently, aboveground storage tanks were removed. In the past, the school used these tanks to provide fuel to operate school equipment and buses. Later, the tanks were found to be a source for soil and groundwater contamination on the school property. Florida DEP is now cleaning up the soil and groundwater on and off the school property.

Contamination of the soil and groundwater is currently only found below the surface of the property at Altha School. People are unlikely to be exposed to contamination unless they dig or drill, so it is unlikely to cause any health problems. Also, groundwater contamination has not affected the public water supply wells. The school, Altha businesses and homes use city water.

Odors sometimes smelled in the Altha elementary school wing are likely petroleum products from the leaking tank. Sewage from septic lines may have also created odors. In January 2006, DEP asked DOH to see what health risk leaking underground petroleum storage tank vapors in classroom air might pose to teachers and students. A DOH scientist attended a meeting held by local legislators to follow up on the concerns.

## **Conclusions**

As part of the health assessment, DOH looked at the levels of chemicals in the indoor air while DEP's contractor was in cleaning up the soil and groundwater at the school. The cleanup involves the use of equipment that removes petroleum chemicals from the school's soil and groundwater. This works mainly by using wells to add air to the contaminated areas. While large amounts of rain during the cleanup likely increased the amount of chemicals found in the school's indoor air in the elementary wing of the Altha School, we found the tested levels would be unlikely to cause anyone to become ill with sporadic exposures. Therefore, the Altha School is classified as "no apparent public health hazard."

Additionally, DOH's review of the air's chemicals does not show a risk for non-cancer illness. The risk of cancer from daily, long-term exposure to the highest levels of chemicals found is so low it is not a concern.

Since DEP's contractor has removed a large amount of contamination from the school property, Florida DOH is not requesting more air sampling.

## **Recommendations**

Because only a few air samples were taken and the cleanup is not yet complete, Florida DOH recommends that people who feel ill should see their doctors. This is especially true for those who have had symptoms for a long time. They should tell their doctors about any concerns they might have about environmental exposures.

## **Future Activities**

Florida DOH will continue to work with DEP and the Calhoun County School Board to give parents health information. DOH will also review any new indoor air data that becomes available.

*For more information or copies of the report, call us toll-free: (877) 798-2772  
Ask at the school for a copy or see the report online at:  
[www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/pha.htm](http://www.myfloridaeh.com/community/SUPERFUND/pha.htm)  
and scroll down to Altha School HC*

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