

Former Mohr Orchard Arsenic Assessment - At the request of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) is performing an initial investigation of elevated concentrations of arsenic in a former orchard located in North Whitehall Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. A private citizen sampled soil on their residential property. Laboratory analysis of this soil sample showed elevated arsenic concentrations. The resident contacted an ATSDR toxicologist in their Atlanta office. The Regional ATSDR Representative contacted EPA to request assistance in investigating this issue.

There is a history of arsenicals being used in conjunction with other chemicals in the fruit orchard industry for control of insects. Using historical data provided by the township, the site area is estimated to be approximately 1.5 square miles. The township is also dealing with a Wal-Mart development and associated Pennsylvania Department of Transportation road project in the area. PADEP will be dealing with any arsenic contamination issues with those projects, as necessary.

USEPA is developing a sampling protocol and is continuing to work with ATSDR to determine a soil screening concentration for arsenic, the specific methodology of composite sampling, and the depths of sampling and analysis. The agencies are working on a comprehensive sampling program and plan to begin with background sampling as early as this week and begin the more comprehensive sampling in September.