

PRESS RELEASE
NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP
LEHIGH COUNTY, PA
06/18/2008

North Whitehall Township would like to take this opportunity to respond to recent discussions regarding reports of arsenic in the soil along Route 309 in the vicinity of the NW1/309 road improvement project.

The Board of Supervisors, and the staff of North Whitehall Township have a strong commitment to our community and its resident's safety and well being, and to that end and in an attempt to relieve any anxieties or fears of our residents, North Whitehall Township is working closely with the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP), PA Department of Transportation (PADOT), and the Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR).

The soil in question is located on former orchard and agricultural farmland, which existed as such for many, many years. Farmers commonly used pesticides and herbicides containing arsenic to protect their crops in years gone by. A low concentration of arsenic was found present in the soil.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry based in Atlanta, Georgia, is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. ATSDR serves the public by using its resources in response to public health concerns, and providing trusted health information to prevent harmful exposures and diseases related to toxic substances.

The following is a statement issued by the On Scene Coordinator from the USEPA:

“At the request of ATSDR and PADEP, the OSC 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 show arsenic concentrations of 140 ppm at a depth of 6 to 12 inches. The resident contacted an ATSDR toxicologist in their Atlanta office. The Regional ATSDR Representative contacted EPA to request assistance in investigating this issue. Township Officials have stated that approximately 6,000 to 7,000 acres were orchards, which is about 1/3 of the township. The Township is also dealing with a road project in the area where arsenic concentrations are reportedly being addressed by the road building contractor. The OSC plans to perform a 5 point composite sample at this one residential property as an initial investigation action. Typical EPA soil sampling depth for investigating exposures issues would be at 3 to 6 inches. However, concerns with soil at a deeper level could be evaluated based upon specific residential uses, such as vegetable gardening. Other investigation techniques will be considered after this initial sampling and analysis is performed.”

Additional information will be made available to our residents to keep all concerned up to date on any new information that is forwarded to us. Any new information will be posted on our web site www.northwhitehall.org as soon as it becomes available.

For additional information, you may wish to visit the following web sites:
PADEP is www.depweb.state.pa.us, PADOT - www.dot.state.pa.us, ATSDR - www.atsdr.cdc.gov. And USEPA - www.epa.gov

Please do not hesitate to call North Whitehall Township's office between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:00 pm at 610-799-3411, and please check our website daily for updates which may have been received.

Yours in Public Service,
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