

Questions

Does Defence need to redo any studies given the safe values for PFOS/PFOA have now changed?

Are certain foods and practises considered a 'low and acceptable' risk in the Human Health Risk Assessment now considered unsafe?

Defence was insistent that a certain level of PFAS was safe and it is now being asked to revise that down ... how can Defence justify its former PFAS standards in light of new evidence?

Response to all

The Commonwealth Department of Health has announced final 'health based guidance values' for use in site investigations for perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorohexane sulfonate (PFHxS) – the three main chemicals of concern in the group of chemicals generally referred to as 'PFAS'.

These values, developed by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) at the request of the Department of Health, replace the interim advice developed by the Environmental Health Standing Committee (enHealth) in June 2016.

The enHealth interim advice was developed through a process of reviewing overseas standards to select suitable values for use in Australia, while awaiting the outcomes of the FSANZ work to develop Australian-specific health based guidance values. The FSANZ Health Based Guidance Values replace the interim enHealth values on which the current Human Health Risk Assessments (HHRA) for Oakey and Williamstown are based.

Defence is not an authority on health and relies on the expertise of relevant government authorities to provide guidance. Defence will as a priority work with its independent environmental consultants to revise and update relevant reports developed as part of the environmental investigations with the FSANZ guidance values, including the Human Health Risk Assessments for Oakey and Williamstown.

On Wednesday 5 April Defence will conduct a community walk-in session, jointly with the Department of Health, FSANZ and other government agencies, to advise communities of the implications of the FSANZ values.

The details for the session are:

Date: Wednesday 5 April 2017

Session Session commences 2:00 pm

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Times: Session concludes 7:00 pm

Venue: Oakey Cultural Centre
Cnr McDonald and Campbell Streets
Oakey

Defence and Health will provide two presentations throughout the session.
The presentations will occur at 2:30 pm and 5:30 pm.

Further information regarding the community walk-in session is available at:
<http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Oakey/CommunityConsultation.asp>

Question

Shine Lawyers are asking residents not to fill out a survey about food intake, for fear it will be used against claimants. Does Defence plan to use the survey in court? Should residents fill it out?

Response

Defence is finalising a detailed environmental investigation to better understand the extent and levels of per- and poly- fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) on, and in the vicinity of, Army Aviation Centre Oakey (AACO).

In 2016 Defence completed a detailed Environmental Site Assessment, including ground water modelling, a Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) and a Preliminary Ecological Risk Assessment.

Following the completion of these assessments it was identified that data gaps remained in some portions of the Investigation Area. As a result Defence is conducting further works to update and refine the 2016 assessment reports.

Defence is conducting a 2017 community survey to inform the ongoing investigation of, and response to, the PFAS contamination in the Oakey Investigation Area, in particular refining the HHRA. The survey will help obtain more information about:

- fruit, vegetables, fish, livestock and poultry grown within the Investigation Area that have potentially been exposed to PFAS and that people eat
- potential new sample locations within the Investigation Area to enable further biota sampling to be undertaken
- how water and land within the Investigation Area was typically used to grow fruit, vegetables, fish, eggs, livestock and poultry

Response provided to journalist
4 April 2017

The questions in the survey seek to understand how people in the Investigation Area would typically use their land to grow produce and livestock, together with how much of this produce, and how often they would typically consume it.

The survey includes multiple choice answers so that the assumptions in the 2016 HHRA can be refined to reflect the frequency and amounts of local produce consumed by Oakey residents. The de-identified survey results will be presented in the refined HHRA due to be released in approximately October 2017.

Participation in the survey is voluntary. The information provided may be shared with Defence's technical advisors, relevant Queensland government agencies and organisations, and environmental consultants directly involved in the response to the groundwater contamination. Such organisations may include, but are not limited to: Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection, Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland Department of Health and Toowoomba Regional Council.

Defence is not aware of Shine Lawyers formally commencing legal proceedings against the Commonwealth at this time, and it is unable to advise whether the refined HHRA may be relevant to matters raised in any proceedings.

Defence is taking a responsible and proactive approach to this issue and is working with Commonwealth, State and local authorities to investigate the nature and extent of PFAS on, or in the vicinity of, the base.

The 2017 Community Survey can be found at:

http://www.defence.gov.au/ID/Oakey/_master/docs/AACOCCommunitySurveyFeb2017.pdf