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Highest dioxin level found in Saginaw River: EPA, MDEQ and Dow at work on emergency cleanup

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(Chicago, Ill. - Nov. 13, 2007) Acting immediately on information received from Dow Chemical Co. of Midland, Mich., U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the company have begun preliminary emergency removal activities at a previously unknown dioxin hot spot on the Saginaw River.

Late Friday, Dow notified EPA and MDEQ of preliminary, unvalidated results of over 1.6 million parts per trillion (ppt) of dioxin in one sample of sediment taken from the Saginaw River. This concentration is 50 times higher than a 32,000 ppt level, previously the highest found in the Saginaw River. It is 15 times higher than any dioxin levels found at hot spots in the Tittabawassee River. This new Saginaw River sample came from a location a half mile below the confluence of the Tittabawassee and Shiawassee Rivers, roughly adjacent to Wickes Park in Saginaw.

"EPA has determined that this emergency work should be performed under an EPA Superfund order," said Regional Administrator Mary A. Gade. "EPA and MDEQ are working closely together on a thorough and appropriate plan to remove this hot spot. Moreover, we must be very cautious to make sure, through laboratory tests, that we determine the extent of this high level of contamination. It may be only one additional hot spot or it could cover a larger area."

Dow discovered the latest hot spot during sampling done according to its own Sept. 14, 2007 work plan, which has not been approved by either EPA or MDEQ.

As a result of EPA Superfund orders in June 2007, Dow is now wrapping up the cleanup of three dioxin hot spots in the Tittabawassee River and should be done by year's end. Those dioxin hot spots along the first six miles of the Tittabawassee River were contaminated at levels up to 87,000 ppt, far above state and federal action levels. The area is prone to flooding and erosion which can spread contamination.

Dioxins are highly toxic compounds that pose serious risks to human health and the environment. EPA's reassessment of the most recent scientific findings on dioxin indicates that it is a more potent chemical than previously understood.

For more information about the health impacts of dioxin and eating fish from the Saginaw River system, members of the public may call the Michigan Dept. of Community Health at 800-648-6942 and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at 312-886-0840.

Dow's Midland facility is a 1,900-acre chemical manufacturing plant. Dioxins and furans come from the production of chlorine-based products. Past waste disposal practices, fugitive emissions and incineration at Dow resulted in dioxin and furan contamination both on- and off-site.

In separate legal actions last week, [EPA cited Dow for air and hazardous waste violations at its Midland facility](#). These involve preliminary findings of violations and Dow has 30 days to discuss resolution of the

allegations.

Fact sheets on dioxins from Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs
<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts104.html>

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