

N62604.AR.001607
NCBC GULFPORT
5090.3a

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE "DIOXIN AT BASE WORRIES NEIGHBORS" NCBC GULFPORT MS
3/29/1995
THE SUN HEARALD

COAST & STATE

Dioxin at base worries neighbors

Several residents battling cancer

By PATRICK PETERSON
THE SUN HERALD

■ GULFPORT — Residents of a Long Beach neighborhood more than a mile down a bayou from the Naval Construction Battalion Center worry

about concentrations of dioxin found at the base and cancers in their area.

Bill Robbins, who has lived on Linwood Circle for 28 years, said he has battled prostate cancer since 1989 and his wife died from breast cancer in 1993. "We've had cancer completely around this circle for years," said Robbins, 61.

State environmental officials learned earlier this month that soil in and around the Seabee base may contain a concentration of dioxins higher than federal hazardous waste standards recommended.

However, state officials don't know if the dioxins found during testing are

toxic, or if toxic dioxins exist in concentrations high enough to be a hazard. Scientists also have begun to suspect that dioxin is less of a cancer risk than it was first thought to be.

Robbins fears that dioxin could have traveled down the bayou from the base to a lake behind his home.

Stephanie Herring, 42, of Linwood Circle, said she is in remission after a year of treatment for lung cancer.

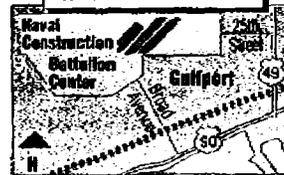
"There's too many cases of cancer in a one-mile block. There's all different types of cancer," she said. "I don't know if it's related or not."

Even if dioxins in the soil were toxic enough to be a hazard, people would have to come into close contact with the soil every day to significantly increase their risk of cancer or physical disorder.

QUESTIONS?

SEABEE BASE

■ The Air Force stored Agent Orange at these spots until 1977. Contaminated soil from the site was incinerated in 1987 and 1988.



■ Anyone with questions about dioxin around the Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport can call environmental program manager Gordon Crace at 871-2485, or call the public affairs office at 871-2699.



Gerry Foubare sits in his kitchen with some mementos of his days as a Seabee in Gulfport. He worked as a mechanic for two years on the former storage site of

Agent Orange. He has been sick with Hodgkin's lymphoma since 1988 and is recovering after a bone marrow transplant.

Post-It™ brand fax transmittal memo 7671 # of pages > 2

To	Yancy Lence	From	Yancy Burke
Co.	MBA Env.	Co.	NAE Gulfport
Dept.		Phone #	601 871-2699
Fax #	703 769-8182	Fax #	

Dioxin

Continued from C-1

ders, said Jerry Banks, acting chief of the hazardous waste division of the state Department of Environmental Quality's Office of Pollution Control. He said the risk of illness is minimal.

Mike Greenwell, a spokesman for the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in Atlanta, said a link between cancer and dioxin would be difficult to establish.

"There are so many other factors," Greenwell said.

"Cancer is many different diseases that has many causes. It's difficult to pinpoint to one specific thing."

No higher rate of cancer

The Seabee base has begun an extensive sampling program to locate and, eventually, remove any dangerous dioxin deposits.

Gordon Crane, environmental program manager for the base, said the levels of dioxin found in the samples from the base are not considered highly dangerous.

"We're talking about fairly low levels, but when you're talking about dioxin, you deal with it," Crane said.

Four of nine soil samples taken at the base in December showed dioxin levels above the Environmental Protection Agency's minimum. The soil from a drainage ditch on the northern side of the base was more than 30 times the accepted level, although samples on either side of the area were well below it.

Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide, was kept in barrels on the base, and some of the barrels leaked during handling when the herbicide was incinerated at sea in 1977. The storage area was cleaned in the 1980s, but some contaminated soil may have remained.

Several kinds of dioxins exist, but only about one-fifth are toxic. Scientists don't know if the dioxin found at the base is among the toxic dioxins and will have to wait for results of further tests, due in mid-April.

A 1994 study showed that the rate of cancer in Harrison County was no higher than in other areas of the

state.

"There were no abnormal increases in deaths due to cancer in Harrison County," said Greenwell, of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

The study included leukemia, breast cancer and some other cancers and was done because of the possible designation of the Chemfax plant in Gulfport as a target for federal cleanup.

"With what was available to us we didn't see a high rate of cancer in Harrison County," Greenwell said. "We would have been able to identify it."

Seabee ill

Gerry Foubare, 31, a former Seabee who worked on the base for two years as a mechanic, often became covered with dirt while working underneath vehicles in the field where Agent Orange had been stored.

"I was exposed to it quite often," Foubare said. "In the summertime, sometimes we even took our T-shirts off. We were rolling in it and breathing it."

Foubare has been sick with Hodgkin's lymphoma since 1988. He is recovering after a bone marrow transplant and hopes to qualify for medical disability payments while he trains for a new career.

"This is the first time in years I've been able to get out and do anything," he said.

Foubare said he doesn't smoke and there was no history of cancer in his family.

"They can't medically state the exact cause," he said. "It's an extremely active cancer. Mine was more aggressive than usual."

Base orders more tests

Analyzing soil samples for dioxin costs \$1,000 per sample, Crane said. About \$250,000 has been spent so far.

"This got high priority," Crane said. "Nobody wants to play around with it."

A panel of civilians will advise the cleanup team about the community's concerns.

Said Crane: "We hope to be able to tell them the risk."

