



# THE MEMPHIS DEPOT TENNESSEE

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## ADMINISTRATIVE RECORD COVER SHEET

AR File Number 185



*Defense Distribution Depot  
Memphis, Tennessee*

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has completed its public health assessment of the Defense Distribution Depot, Memphis, Tennessee.

Environmental health scientists from ATSDR first visited the Depot in 1994. After reviewing past environmental data, they asked for additional environmental sampling and reviewed those results as well. ATSDR issued a report in November 1995 and a follow-up health consultation in April 1996.

**ATSDR Findings**

**People living near the Depot were *not exposed* to contamination at levels that could cause health problems.**

Although hazardous chemicals have been found at the Depot and in the groundwater under the Depot, there is no environmental evidence that people are at risk of having health effects from these chemicals. The hazardous chemicals have not been found in places and amounts that would be harmful to people living near the Depot.

You can write to request copies of the public health assessment or health consultation on the Memphis Defense Distribution Depot. Please use this address for your requests:

*Attention: Chief, PERIS Branch  
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
1600 Clifton Road (E-56)  
Atlanta, GA 30333*

At the June 26, 1996, Town Meeting held by Councilwoman Janet Hooks, a participant at the meeting presented a list of questions. We provide answers to these questions below. All the answers emphasize the major finding of our public health evaluation: *Contamination at the Depot does not pose a health hazard to people living on or near the Depot, and it did not pose a health hazard in the past.*

**1** *Why does ATSDR only examine existing data (old data) when assessing health threats to the community, especially when lack of data appears to be the problem?*

ATSDR had enough data to make a dependable public health decision in the case of the Memphis Defense Distribution Depot. Our finding is that *Contamination at the Depot does not pose a public health hazard and did not pose a health hazard in the past.* We base our conclusion on our independent evaluation of historical data and on data collected as recently as 1995 and 1996.

**2** *What about cumulative effects from years of exposure (meaning combined effects of toxic waste in the area)?*

ATSDR recognizes that many people are concerned about general environmental contamination throughout Memphis. However, our role is limited to evaluating if people have come into contact with contamination from the Depot. We did not evaluate the larger environmental issue of city-wide contamination. ATSDR *can* state that the Depot is *not* contributing harmful contamination to the community. Other government agencies, such as the city and county governments on the local level and state government and federal agencies such as EPA, take regulatory actions to protect the overall quality of the environment.

**3** *Just what are the dangers to the community above ground after years of open dumping on the DD site? Have there ever been any?*

There is no evidence of "open dumping" at the Depot. Portions of Dunn Field have been used for open storage of surplus equipment, such as office equipment, machinery, and machine parts. This equipment would not be a health hazard to the neighborhood. According to Depot records, waste chemicals disposed at Dunn Field were buried. Because the chemicals were buried, there is no danger that contamination would have been in the air or surface soil. The only potential contamination path for buried waste is underground water. People have *not* been exposed to this groundwater, so these buried chemicals pose no danger to them.

**4** *Have data been collected on DD employees who have died from cancer or presently have cancer?*

The normal operations of the Depot are not the type that would have regularly exposed employee to hazardous materials.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The Depot is required by law to take measures to protect workers from hazardous working conditions. Federal law requires that records be kept of any accidents or incidents that result in health hazard or injury to employees. The Depot is also required by law to keep records on health problems of workers that could be related to working conditions.

**5** *Have data been collected on DD employees who may have been exposed and who are living with chronic illnesses?*

The normal operations of the Depot are not the type that would have exposed employees regularly to hazardous materials. However, as was stated in the answer to the previous question, the Depot is required by law to protect its workers and to keep records of any accidents and any health problems that could be related to working conditions. This recordkeeping is overseen by two federal agencies: NIOSH and OSHA.

**6** *The Hollywood Dump has a warning sign posted indicating it is a Superfund site. Why has this not been done at the DD? Who is responsible for posting danger signs?*

The Hollywood Dump is an abandoned disposal area. The purpose of the warning signs is to prevent people from coming in contact with hazardous materials when there are no people there to warn them personally. It is important that people do not (unknowingly or on purpose) go into areas where these materials are located.

On the other hand, people still work at the Depot. It is fenced, posted with "No Trespassing" signs and patrolled by security personnel. These measures protect the public from getting into areas where hazards (chemical or physical) might exist. People outside the fences of the Depot are *not* in danger from contamination inside the

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