



Minnesota Department of Health

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memorandum

TO: Betsy Gerbec
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FROM: Tim Burkhardt, Larry Souther
MDH Site Assessment & Consultation

DATE: March 28, 1995

SUBJECT: Summary of the Hawkins Chemical Consultation

This memo summarizes MDH's recent involvement in assessing and communicating health issues related to the fire at Hawkins Chemical Company in Minneapolis.

BACKGROUND Hawkins Chemical Company is located at the edge of a large industrial area in Minneapolis. On the evening of February 25, 1995, fire broke out in a warehouse stocked with swimming pool and pest control chemicals owned by the Lynde Company, a Hawkins subsidiary. Pest control chemicals stored at the site included pyrethrins, chlorpyrifos, 2-(1-methylethoxy) Phenol Methyl Carbamate, and Bendiocarb. Pool chemicals included calcium hypochlorites, dichloro and trichloro s-triazinetriene, ammonium chlorides, ethylene dichlorides, lithium hypochlorites, and sodium bromide. An estimated 180,000 pounds of granulated chlorine and several hundred pounds of pest control chemicals burned.

The fire burned about 24 hours, resulting in a plume of noxious smoke downwind for much of that time. The fire was allowed to burn due to concerns about water reactivity of the chemicals and environmental damage from runoff that would have resulted. Some downwind residents were evacuated and others were requested to remain indoors. About 40 residents were seen at a nearby fire station to be checked for signs of irritated eyes and lungs. One person was treated for an injured ankle suffered during evacuation and another was treated for eye and/or lung irritation.

MDH INVOLVEMENT MDH was not involved in any on-site health consultations during the incident. However, in addition to performing standard emergency response incident surveillance, MDH was asked to discuss health issues at a large public meeting. The meeting was organized by the Minneapolis City Council in cooperation with local and state agencies to discuss the fire, health issues, and the effectiveness of the emergency response to the incident.

MDH attended an organizational meeting with other state agencies prior to the public meeting and made a presentation and answered questions at the public meeting that followed. In preparation, MDH reviewed TOXNET and other toxicological information for the substances listed above, with particular attention to inhalation and irritant effects (respiratory and mucous membrane) and any chronic effects possible from this acute exposure. MDH fielded several questions from concerned residents, especially relating to health effects (vomiting) and pre-existing conditions (asthma) in children.

No further health assessment activity is anticipated.