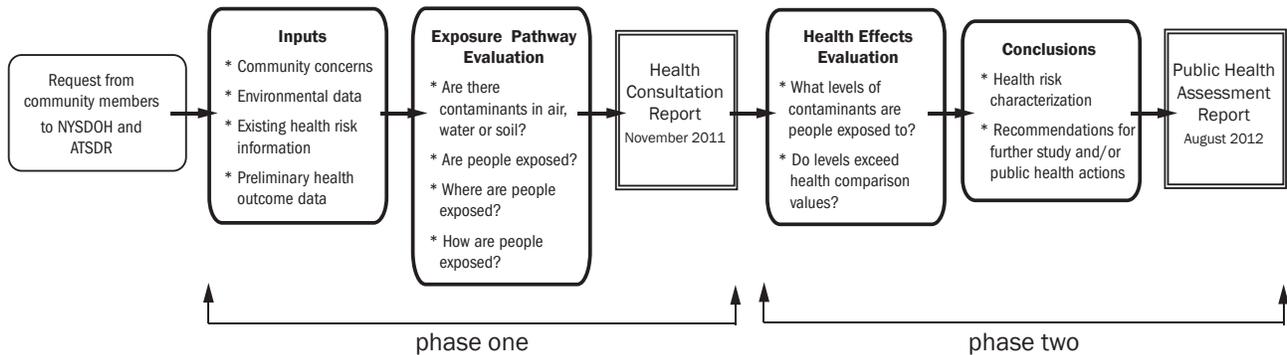


Ravena Cement Plant Public Health Assessment Information Sheet #1: Project Overview (November 2010)

Steps in the public health assessment for the Ravena cement plant



This Information Sheet is the first in a series being prepared by the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) to explain what is being done to address community concerns about contaminants from the cement plant in Ravena, New York.

Background: What is the issue?

The Ravena cement plant, currently owned by Lafarge North America Inc., has been operating since 1962. Over time, community members have raised environmental and health concerns about contaminants released from the plant. In 2009, a local community group, Community Advocates for Safe Emissions (CASE), asked the NYS DOH to investigate whether contaminants from the cement plant have affected people's health. In response, the NYS DOH and the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are now completing a public health assessment. Based on the results and findings, further studies or public health actions may be recommended. This information sheet addresses the Public Health assessment process.

What is a health assessment?

A health assessment is a process (or series of steps) used to evaluate available information about contaminants released from a site or facility estimating whether they increase the risk for health effects in a community (see diagram above).

NYS DOH and ATSDR first need to determine whether people are exposed to (come in contact with) contaminants (chemicals, airborne particulates, or settled dust) from the cement plant through what they breathe, get on their skin or ingest. Contamination can only harm health if people are exposed to it. Describing how people are exposed to contaminants in air, water, soil or dust is called the **exposure pathway evaluation**.

If people are exposed to contaminants in air, water or dust, then the NYS DOH and ATSDR need to know whether the levels (or amount) that people are exposed to are high enough to harm health. This is because only when exposures exceed a health protective level (health comparison value) are they likely to increase the risk for health effects in people who are exposed (for example, a community). Describing whether contaminant levels in air, water, soil or dust exceed health protective levels is called the **health effects evaluation**.

How will the health assessment be completed?

The NYS DOH and ATSDR are completing the health assessment in two phases (see diagram above). This approach provides the community with an opportunity to participate in the health assessment process. Each phase includes completion of a draft report for public comment and final report which addresses issues and answers questions raised during the public comment period.

Community participation

Community participation is important to the success of the Ravena cement plant health assessment process. The NYS DOH and ATSDR encourage all community members to provide input during coming public meetings, community outreach events and as written comments on draft reports available for public comment at the completion of phase one (Health Consultation report) and phase two (Public Health Assessment report).

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