



RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

NICK LYON
DIRECTOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

CONTACT: Angela Minicuci

Aug. 14, 2018

517-241-2112

MinicuciA@michigan.gov

MDHHS and KCHD release PFAS related-cancer incidence report for Kent County

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and Kent County Health Department (KCHD) today released a review of cancer incidence data in support of ongoing efforts to respond to community concerns regarding per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) found in some drinking water samples in northern Kent County. PFAS are a diverse group of fluorinated organic chemicals resistant to heat, water, and oil that have been used for decades in industrial applications and consumer products.

Overall, except for prostate cancer, this data review found no consistent elevation in cancer incidence for the selected areas of northern Kent County. The prostate cancer results are difficult to interpret as published associations with PFAS exposure are weak and there are other factors known to influence prostate incidence that are beyond the scope of this review to address. This data review cannot determine the linkage of any cancer occurrence with environmental conditions including PFAS exposure nor the cause of observed increases or decreases of any cancer types over time.

Based on peer-reviewed literature, a number of cancers have been found to be associated with PFAS according to currently available peer-reviewed literature. Some associations have been reported in the scientific literature with incidence of kidney and testicular, with possible but weak evidence for prostate and ovarian cancers.

MDHHS examined the incidence of invasive cancers from 2000 to 2014 in twelve United States census tracts and two ZIP codes (49341 and 49306) in selected areas of northern Kent County. These ZIP codes include the communities of Rockford, Plainfield Township, Cannonsburg, and Belmont, Michigan. The ZIP code and U.S. census tract boundaries serve

as the geographic scope of this analysis, but do not exactly match the MDEQ Northern Kent County PFAS Environmental Investigation areas.

Additional findings include:

- Prostate cancers were significantly higher than expected for the two combined ZIP codes for all three 5-year time periods examined but declined across time.
- The incidence of urogenital cancers from the twelve Kent County census tracts did not differ from expected when compared to white State of Michigan residents cancer rate.

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- However, four census tracts had significantly higher rates than those for white Kent County residents in the first time period only.
- Kidney and renal pelvis cancers were higher than expected for the combined ZIP codes for the 2000 – 2004 time period, but this difference declined over time.
- The yearly incidence of urogenital cancers for the two Kent County ZIP codes indicate no trends, however some individual years and all years combined have significantly higher than expected rates based on Michigan rates.
 - This is primarily driven by the prostate cancer incidence findings.
- Testicular cancers were not significantly higher than expected for the combined ZIP codes during the overall 2000-2014 time period.
- Ovarian cancers were not significantly higher than expected for the combined ZIP codes during the overall 2000-2014 time period.

Given ongoing concerns in the area, MDHHS and KCHD are committed to evaluating new data and information as it becomes available. This cancer incidence report establishes a baseline of information that could be used going forward as work with the MDHHS, KCHD, and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Agency for Toxic Substances Disease Registry progresses to characterize people's exposure to PFAS. This work will include collecting people's blood for PFAS testing and information on their exposure to PFAS. Kent County was chosen for this assessment because no other area in Michigan has as many wells exceeding the advisory level nor are any test results as high. Implementation of the assessment should begin by mid fall.

Launched in 2017, the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART) is the first multi-agency action team of its kind in the nation. Agencies

representing health, environment and other branches of state government have joined together to investigate sources and locations of PFAS contamination in the state, take action to protect people's drinking water, and keep the public informed we learn more about this nationally emerging contaminant. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse.

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