Message

From: Werner, Lora [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=921F9F156035403FA605C142A287CC1A-LWERNE02]
Sent: 11/3/2017 8:33:56 PM
To: 'Lawrence.C.Messina@wv.gov' [Lawrence.C.Messina@wv.gov]
CC: ibd7@cdc.gov; Helverson, Robert [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=e96005a319744540a11a1aed352395d1-Rhelvers]; Markiewicz, Karl [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=a9af7eaacbcb41d8a469eb1f11183ad6-Kmarkiew]; ran2@cdc.gov [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=03bbfb4721134794ba6e837cee3f0dd3-ran2@cdc.gov]; Ferrell, Mark [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=8ccaf8c895c8426e9b5c274d26b7f833-Ferrell, Mark]; Walter M Ivey [Walter.M.Ivey@wv.gov]; 'jim.a.rose@wv.gov' [jim.a.rose@wv.gov]; 'Rebecca.Fugitt@odh.ohio.gov' [Rebecca.Fugitt@odh.ohio.gov]; 'Walker, Eric A' [Eric.A.Walker@wv.gov]; Erica.R.Thomasson@wv.gov
Subject: FW: Parkersburg Fire - Public Health Guidance

Hello Lawrence
Thanks for corresponding with me about this earlier today. I really appreciate how you provided the full context of our email alongside your excerpted summary points. I found the link online for this on the Mid Ohio Valley website.

One item that may not have come across as much in our 10/31/17 email but we tried to emphasize in our prior and ongoing communications with EPA and state/local health is the issue of how little we really know about the chemical contamination that was in the air (and may never know). We will continue to review the laboratory analytical information that will be available from EPA and CTEH going forward, but likely there will remain unanswered questions about the specific chemical exposures community members and responders experienced during this incident. I think it is important to continue to emphasize this limitation to the public.

ATSDR/CDC's media office did receive a media inquiry from a local TV station in Parkersburg this afternoon about this, but I don't think we will be able to accommodate their request for an interview by 5 pm today.

Best, Lora

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Please note: emails may appear as @epa.gov because we share IT services in our regional office

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From: Ferrell, Mark
Sent: Friday, November 03, 2017 12:15 PM
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Subject: Fw: Parkersburg Fire - Public Health Guidance

FYI

From: Messina, Lawrence C <Lawrence.C.Messina@wv.gov>
Sent: Friday, November 3, 2017 11:41 AM

Good morning. Here is what should be the final version of the public health guidance. I've just tweaked the summary bullet points up top, adding language from the detailed guidance.

The detailed guidance remains verbatim from what ATSDR provided. I just broke up the paragraphs for readability while underlining "any" in the line "Smoke from any fires" to emphasize that point.

ALSO – I touched base with ATSDR and you'll see contact information below for any media who ask about this guidance.

Director Woodyard and Ms. Brainard: I don't think we should include that contact info when it is posted online, as this contact is for media and not the general public. Do you concur?

The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has provided guidance on public health in response to the Parkersburg fire.

Key points include:

- From what ATSDR has learned so far, people in the areas potentially affected by the smoke have done well protecting themselves following the advice from local officials.
- The primary concern cited by the health officials is "spikes" in particulate matter (soot) detected by air monitoring in the opening days of the fire;
- The spike occurred after midnight until just before dawn, and usually lasted for periods of less than an hour up to about four hours.
- Otherwise, the concentrations dropped below the air standards.
- ATSDR estimates that the spikes ranged from "Good" to "Hazardous" on the Air Quality Index (AQI).
- The U.S. EPA advises that for "Hazardous" air quality conditions from particle pollution, sensitive groups (people with heart and lung disease, older adults and children) remain indoors and keep activity levels low, and that others avoid all physical activity outdoors.
- These recommendations mirror the guidance provided by county and local officials in response to the fire. Local authorities in consultation with state and federal public health and environmental officials provided guidance to protect public health, including advice on sheltering in homes and avoiding the smoke.
- Air quality improved dramatically the weekend following the fire. Results then were in the "Good" to "Moderate" air quality index ranges.

- Smoke from any fire irritates the lungs, nose, and throat. Once exposure to the smoke from this fire has stopped, any symptoms should subside fairly quickly.
- If any individual has symptoms that persist, they should consult their personal healthcare provider.
- When additional information on the contents of the warehouse and the air and water quality becomes available, a better appreciation of the potential health effects of this fire can be made.
- The federal, local, and state health and environmental professionals working on this fire will continue to work together until we are confident that the community concerns are addressed.

Here is the detailed guidance from ATSDR. Media inquiries for CDC/ATSDR can be submitted to envhealthmedia@cdc.gov or via phone at 770-488-0700.

This public health update was developed by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at the request of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency after consultation with state and local public health departments in West Virginia and Ohio.

Beginning shortly after the fire started on October 21st, EPA and the State have been monitoring environmental conditions around the Ames Warehouse fire at Camden and Broadway in Parkersburg. Additional air monitoring was conducted by the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (CTEH) working for Wood County authorities, beginning the Monday after the fire started.

Because information on the contents of the warehouse has not been certain, this air monitoring has focused on particulate matter less than 10 micrometers in diameter (PM10) and less than 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5) to track the smoke from the fire.

These particulates are small enough to be breathed deep into the lungs and are usually a good indicator of potential health issues. Additional measurements have been made of common breakdown products of plastics and carbon monoxide. All fires can also be evaluated by the concentrations of carbon monoxide that are produced.

The primary concern for health officials has been "spikes" of both PM10 and PM2.5. These spikes have been above 24-hour air quality standards for open air for brief periods of time during the day or night. (You can learn more about air quality standards at https://www.airnow.gov; look for information on the Air Quality Index (AQI) on the right side of the page.)

Many of the spikes have occurred after midnight until just before dawn, usually lasting for periods of less than an hour up to about 4 hours. Then the concentrations dropped below the air standards.

Because of wind conditions and the hilly nature of the ground around the warehouse, it is not known how long these higher concentrations have lasted in any given area away from the sampling locations.

Local authorities in consultation with state and federal public health and environmental officials made the recommendations to protect public health, including advice on sheltering in their homes and avoiding the smoke. West Virginia officials provided periodic updates to their counterparts in Ohio to make sure individuals in the area possibly affected by the smoke from the fire were made aware of the recommendations to protect themselves.

Air quality in the area of the fire improved dramatically over the weekend. Average results on October 27-28, 2017 from EPA showed PM2.5 results in the "Good" to "Moderate" air quality index ranges. There were much lower and less frequent spikes of higher concentrations compared to what were observed earlier in the week, with the maximum values as expected at the source air perimeter monitoring location.

Smoke from any fire irritates the lungs, nose, and throat. Individuals with pre-existing respiratory and cardiac conditions are more sensitive to the effects of the smoke from this fire.

From what ATSDR has seen in the environmental data so far, once exposure to the smoke from this fire has stopped, any symptoms should subside fairly quickly.

If any individual has symptoms that persist, residents should consult their personal healthcare provider or medical home. Other professionals through the local hospitals, regional poison control centers, and public health agencies are available to your clinician(s)/healthcare provider should they have questions on the effects of the smoke.

There have been strong plastics odors as well as typical combustion odors in areas where the smoke has been. Information on what would be causing these odors is not known. The public health implications of these odors cannot be determined until additional information is available.

However, strong odors in air can cause symptoms in people. Symptoms from odors vary based on your personal sensitivity to the odor. In general, as the odors from the smoke increase, more people may experience symptoms.

In general, the most common symptoms from odors are:
- headaches,
- nasal congestion,
- eye, nose, and throat irritation,
- nausea, and
- cough

Young children, the elderly, and pregnant women may have higher sensitivity to odors than other people.

People more sensitive to odors can experience:
- chest tightness,
- shortness of breath,
- wheezing,
- heart palpitations,
- nausea,
- drowsiness, and
- mental depression

These symptoms generally occur at the time of exposure and tend to subside quickly when the odors go away. The intensity of these symptoms depend on the concentration of the odor in air, frequency of the odor, and duration of the odor.

Avoiding the smoke and the odors should reduce a reaction. More information about odors and their health effects can be found at: https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/odors/index.html.

A number of respiratory viruses are also circulating during this time of year. In combination with the smoke and/or odors, symptoms experienced may be exacerbated. A medical clinician can assist in determining the cause of your symptoms.

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources and the Ohio Department of Health initiated a process called syndromic surveillance during the event. Syndromic surveillance is a means of tracking emergency department chief complaints including respiratory symptoms.

Based on the information to date, an increase of patients with respiratory symptoms was seen at Ohio emergency departments in Washington County earlier in the week. This increase was determined to be related to seasonal illness.

From what ATSDR has learned so far, people in the areas potentially affected by the smoke have done well protecting themselves following the advice from local officials.

The need for additional studies is being considered by ATSDR and other federal health agencies. If it is determined that there is a need or benefit for additional studies, state and federal health agencies will work through local authorities to conduct those studies.

When additional information on the contents of the warehouse and the air and water quality becomes available, a better appreciation of the potential health effects of this fire can be made. This additional information should help with the decision for any additional studies.

The federal, local, and state health and environmental professionals working on this fire will continue to work together until we are confident that the community concerns are addressed.

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