



Results of the Medical Testing Program

www.atsdr.cdc.gov

1.888.42.ATSDR

October 2005

Environmental
Health



For Former Workers of the Stauffer Chemical Company, Tarpon Springs, Florida

Medical testing showed that 70% of Stauffer Chemical Co. workers tested had a mild or moderate chronic respiratory problem

Why did ATSDR do medical testing?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) reported in April 2003 that workers at the Stauffer Chemical Company were exposed to harmful chemicals, dust, and gases. Because of concerns expressed by community members and an elected official, ATSDR arranged and paid for a medical evaluation of people who worked in phosphorous production at the Stauffer plant for at least 2 years. About 425 out of the 2,520 workers at Stauffer were eligible for the testing. In September and December 2004, ATSDR informed these workers about the testing by sending letters of invitation and other outreach efforts to arrange participation in the testing.

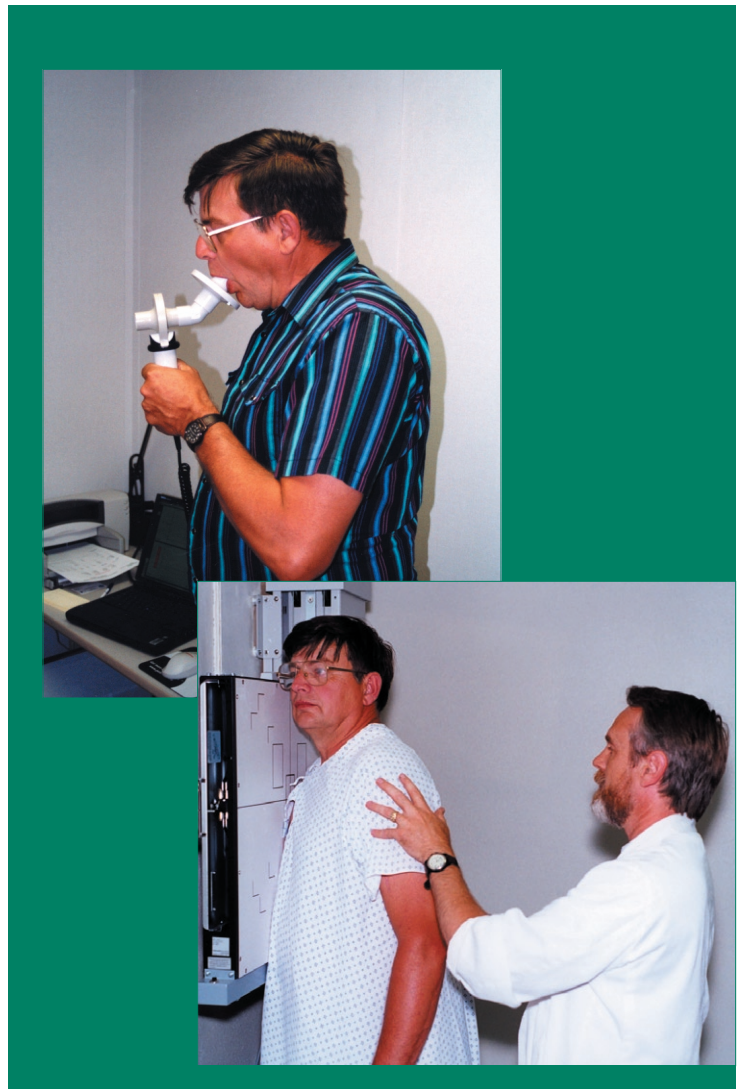
What types of tests were done?

From October 2004 to April 2005, 36 workers were evaluated at University Community Health, Occupational Health Services in Holiday, FL. Doctors took a work and medical history, and performed physical exams which included lung function tests (spirometry), and x-rays of the lungs. A lung specialist (pulmonologist) gave more testing to anyone with an abnormal test result. These doctors were not associated with the Stauffer Chemical Company. Copies of test results were given to the worker and to their doctor with the worker's permission. In some situations the worker's primary care physician was contacted to inform them of urgent medical findings.

What did ATSDR find?

The 36 workers who were tested were men between 47 and 90 years of age. These men worked between 2 and 36 years at Stauffer but most men worked for 10 years or less. Nearly 80% of these men reported handling asbestos-containing material over their entire work career. In addition, 67% said they smoked and 20% had a respiratory disease that had been diagnosed by their primary doctor prior to taking part in this medical evaluation.

The respiratory health status for these workers is summarized in the table below. More than one health condition can be present in the same person. Eleven (30%) men had normal respiratory health status and 25 (70%) men had a mild or moderate abnormality of the respiratory system. The most common conditions were pneumoconiosis (a dust-related chronic lung disease) and other airway/lung conditions. Compared with the 11 workers who had a normal respiratory health status, the 25 workers with a respiratory problem were slightly older, and most of these men smoked.



Results of the Respiratory Examinations of Former Phosphorous Production Workers, Stauffer Chemical Company

Respiratory Health Status*	Number	Percent
Normal	11 of 36	30%
Abnormal**	25 of 36	70%
Pneumoconiosis (lung disease from dust)	12 of 25	48%
Other Airway/Lung Condition (indication of previous illness etc)	11 of 25	44%
Asbestosis*** (chronic lung inflammation)	7 of 25	28%
Chronic Bronchitis (chronic inflammation of bronchus or upper airway)	2 of 25	8%

* Status was determined by doctors at Occupational Health Services and/or the pulmonologist.

** More than one condition can be present for the same individual.

*** Evidence of asbestosis included pleural plaques or thickening of the pleura or parenchymal disease.

The 25 workers' abnormal respiratory conditions as diagnosed by the doctors at Occupational Health Services and/or the pulmonologist may have been caused by exposures at work, at other places, or from a previous illness. Some of these respiratory conditions could have been caused by an infection of the lung or made worse by smoking or other health conditions.

Because the 36 workers tested were volunteers and self-selected, the results cannot be generalized to everyone else who worked at Stauffer. ATSDR will provide health information for workers to increase knowledge and awareness about respiratory wellness. At this time, ATSDR is not planning to do further medical testing of workers.

**Please contact Steven Inserra,
Epidemiologist, for more information
toll free at (888) 422-8737
or e-mail steve.inserra@cdc.hhs.gov**

Acknowledgement

We thank the doctors and staff of Occupational Health Services for conducting the medical testing program and the individuals who took part in the medical testing.

Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions in this report have not been formally disseminated by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and should not be construed to represent any agency determination or policy.

