



## Note to correspondents: More information on new dioxin hot spot in the Saginaw River

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(Chicago, Ill. - Nov. 14, 2007) Recent published statements by a Dow Chemical Co. spokesman regarding the company's discovery of another dioxin hot spot in the Saginaw River may leave the public with mistaken impressions about the health concerns related to this finding and exposure pathways. Comparing a highly toxic chemical such as dioxin to ink drops in a drum as Dow recently did, minimizes the real concern regarding dioxin's toxicity and the very high level found.

Dow reported a preliminary result of over 1.6 million parts per trillion (ppt) from a single sediment sample in the Saginaw River. Until now, the highest level found in the Saginaw River was 32,000 ppt. Under June 2007 EPA orders, Dow has been removing three dioxin hotspots from the Tittabawassee River which had concentrations of up to 87,000 ppt.

"The sediment concentration recently reported by Dow is probably the highest level ever found in the Great Lakes," said Dr. Milton Clark, EPA Region 5's senior health and science advisor. "While not exactly comparable, the concentration is more than 1,000 times higher than EPA's action level of 1,000 parts per trillion that triggers cleanup of dioxin-contaminated soils at residences. It is more than 10,000 times higher than the State of Michigan's residential cleanup criterion of 90 parts per trillion."

"Under most circumstances, EPA is more concerned by high levels of dioxin in sediments because they contaminate the aquatic food chain. EPA national dioxin guidance and risk assessment approaches indicate that dioxin levels found in sediments may need to be lower than those in soils to fully protect public health," Dr. Clark added.

Fish consumption is one of the primary exposure pathways in the Saginaw River system. Adverse human health effects associated with exposure to dioxin include impacts to the reproductive, immune and endocrine systems. Dioxin is also a potential human carcinogen.

Since 1978, the state of Michigan has issued fish consumption advisories for the Saginaw River Watershed. A recent University of Michigan study revealed that people consuming fish from the Saginaw River system have higher than average levels of dioxins in their blood.

The new Saginaw River sample came from a location a half-mile below the confluence of the Tittabawassee and Shiawassee Rivers, roughly adjacent to Wickes Park in Saginaw. EPA, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Dow are working to validate the sample result and determine the best way to remove the hot spot.

For more information about eating fish from the Saginaw River system, call the Michigan Dept. of Community Health at 800-648-6942. For information about the health effects of dioxin and pathways of human exposure, go the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's Web site at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts104.html>, or call 312-886-0840.

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