



## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Airstrip** **September 8, 2000**

### **Introduction**

The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GEPD) requested that the Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) address health issues associated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) airstrip in Decatur County, Georgia. GDPH reviewed available environmental sampling data to determine if adverse health effects are possible from past, present, and future exposure to environmental contamination at this facility.

### **Site Description and History**

The ACE airstrip is at the end of Airport Road off Booster Club Road in southwest Georgia, approximately one and a half miles north of the Florida border. The former airstrip was closed following the construction of the current airstrip. The former airstrip is maintained for pesticide storage, and the landing strip and the operations are covered with vegetation. The site consists of a utility building, a runway, a former mixing and dispensing area, a tie-down for aircraft, and an on-site, nonpotable well. Facility access is limited to authorized personnel only. The only road accessing the facility is patrolled by a guard during operating hours and is secured with a locked gate during nonoperating hours. A barbed-wire fence partially surrounds the site, except for an area where dense vegetation provides an effective barrier. Physical hazards on site include vehicles, machinery, and equipment. The public have not and are not expected to trespass on the site.

From 1958 to 1978, ACE conducted vector control operations at nearby Lake Seminole. Pesticides and herbicides were mixed, stored, and loaded into aircraft at the airstrip. During those times, pesticides and herbicides were sometimes spilled in the storage and staging areas.

### **Environmental Sampling**

Beginning in May 1993, approximately 290 surface and subsurface soil samples from the areas around the former and current airstrips have been analyzed for pesticides, PCBs and herbicides.

### **Results**

Results indicate that DDT, DDD, DDE dieldrin, and heptachlor epoxide are present at levels exceeding soil comparison values.

### **Conclusions**

GDPH found that the contamination at the site might be a health problem for on-site workers who have repeated contact to contaminants in soil. The soil contamination is a health issue because on-site workers were likely exposed occupationally to pesticides in the past and might be exposed during work now and in the future. Repeated additional exposure to contaminated soil could result in higher exposures than what is considered safe. For that reason, the proposed removal of contaminated soil is a prudent public health action.

### **Recommendations**

GDPH recommends the following:

- Access to the areas adjacent to the former and current airstrips should be limited to prevent employees from being exposed to contaminated soil until excavation required by GEPD is completed.
- Groundwater monitoring should continue to provide additional assurance that any potential for exposure to groundwater contaminated from this site will be identified before it occurs.
- A public health information repository should be established at the local public library for residents to review public health and environmental reports pertaining to the site.