

Rome Brain CCI February 17, 2010

On November 3, 2009, a 40 year old resident of Floyd County contacted the Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) with concerns about cancer. He stated that he was diagnosed in February 2009 with brain cancer and had no family history of cancer. He believed his cancer might have been related to the various gas companies and a former bauxite mine near his home. The resident lived at his current address for ten years, the same amount of time his doctor told him that it took for his cancer to develop. When asked about his occupation and smoking history, he stated that he had worked for Pepsi Bottling Company, and was a former casual cigarette smoker.

On December 1, 2009, GDPH staff contacted the Georgia Comprehensive Cancer Registry (GCCR) to have them respond to the resident's cancer concerns and complete a cancer analysis for the resident's zip code (30161), Rome, and Floyd County Georgia. The Georgia Comprehensive Cancer Registry (GCCR) is a population-based registry that collects, maintains, and analyzes cancer incidence data in Georgia. According to the GCCR, most brain tumors are not associated with any known risk factors and have no obvious cause, but there are a few factors that may raise the risk of brain tumors. The best established environmental risk factor for brain tumors is radiation exposure, most commonly from some type of radiation therapy. Most people with brain tumors do not have a family history of the disease, but in rare cases brain and spinal cord cancers run in families. Also, people with impaired immune systems have an increased risk of developing lymphomas of the brain or spinal cord.

On December 7, 2009, the resident was mailed a letter informing him that the GCCR would be investigating his cancer concerns as GDPH staff investigates his environmental concerns. Included with the letter were three informational brochures: the Chemical Hazards Program, Cancer and the Environment, and the National Cancer Institute 1-800-4-CANCER.

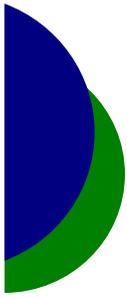
On December 9, 2009, GDPH called and e-mailed the resident additional information about environmental

health and cancer. On December 10, 2009, the GCCR mailed the resident an analysis of cancer incidence data for his zip code, county, and state. The analysis did not find an excess number of brain cancer cases, however there were an excess number of cases of lung and prostate cancer in the area. Cigarette smoking has been well-documented as a major cause for lung cancer, and the Rome area has one of the highest smoking rates in the state.

Many people believe that cancer is usually caused by toxic substances in the home, community, or workplace. Although we do not currently know the exact impact of environmental pollutants on cancer development, less than 10% of cancers are estimated to be related to toxic exposures. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS) and other sources, one out of three Americans now living will eventually develop cancer. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States following heart disease.

On December 17, 2009 the resident was sent a letter regarding the completed environmental investigation. Known releases of hazardous substances to air, soil, and water are listed in the Georgia Environmental Protection Division's Hazardous Site Inventory (www.gaepd.org). From the 2009 Hazardous Site Inventory (HSI), Floyd County has nine sites on the index and all are located in Rome. Of the four companies the resident listed, namely Atlanta Gas Light, Colonial Pipeline, Southern National, and an unknown gas company or transfer station, none are listed on the HSI Index for Floyd County, although they may be listed in other counties. Another gas company, Southern Natural Gas (Rome), was also not listed. Although zip code 30161 contains six of the nine sites, all are more than a mile away from the resident's address.

GDPH also reviewed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) (www.epa-echo.gov). ECHO is a site that provides information about compliance inspections, violations, and enforcement actions against companies for violating regulatory standards. ECHO listed none of



CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM
Environmental Health Branch
Georgia Department of Community Health
Atlanta, GA



the companies the resident named in their records; however, Southern Natural Gas (Rome) provided a match. Southern Natural Gas (Rome) has no alleged or current significant violations, and no formal enforcement actions in the past five years.

Regarding the resident's concerns about an unnamed and closed bauxite mine, there have been several such mines in Floyd County (Coosa Valley region).

The health effects of bauxite exposure primarily involve occupational exposures, which affects respiratory function or cerebrovascular disease. Bauxite exposure is not known to be associated with cancers.

Public Health Recommendations: There are no recommendations.