



**The Georgia Division of Public Health published a  
Public Health Assessment for the following site:**

**PITTARD ROAD CANCER CLUSTER INVESTIGATION  
Clarke County, Georgia**

**PUBLIC HEALTH ASSESSMENT SUMMARY (3/10/2006)**

A **Public Health Assessment** provides advice on specific public health issues related to human exposure to toxic chemicals found in the environment. Anyone can request a Public Health Assessment. The Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) receives requests to conduct public health assessments from residents, local health departments, and federal and state public health and environmental agencies.

Pittard Road is a neighborhood in Athens, Georgia, located between highway 72 (Hull Road) and Voyles Road on approximately 16 acres near the northeast border of Clarke County (Figure 1). Pittard Road is a small residential community bordered by dense woodland. Approximately in the middle of the length of Pittard Road are two sets of railroad tracks: the eastern end of Pittard Road has single family homes possessing individual water wells, and the western end has single family homes connected to a municipal water source. There are no surface water bodies within one mile.

In 2003, a concerned citizen contacted the Northeast Health District (NEHD) located in Athens about a suspected cancer cluster in the Pittard Road community. Initial information gathered by NEHD revealed that several residents living on Pittard Road reported that they had been diagnosed with cancer, and some residents believed that the cancer cases may be the result of exposure to environmental contamination from nearby industries or unknown sources. Residents with wells are the only population that has expressed concern; therefore, the investigation was limited to those residents living in approximately 35 homes with private wells living east of the railroad tracks. In response to community concerns:

- NEHD and GDPH conducted an investigation into occurrences of cancer in the Pittard Road community, and no statistically significant incidence rates or numbers of cases of cancer were found. Of the confirmed cases (nine), five (56%) were breast cancer; however, several of these were diagnosed in related women.
- GDPH conducted an environmental investigation into known and potential releases of regulated substances to air, water, and soil within approximately one mile of the homes.
- GDPH coordinated a well water sampling event with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the NEHD. Nine wells were sampled and analyzed for approximately 130 parameters, including regulated chemicals and bacteria. Results revealed no chemicals above levels of regulatory or health concern. Several wells had elevated levels of coliform bacteria and the homeowners were advised to disinfect their wells using GDPH policies and procedures.
- NEHD coordinated radon sampling and no elevated levels of radon were detected in indoor air.
- GDPH conducted an environmental health education needs assessment to assist with community education, and evaluate public health activities.
- As a result of the needs assessment, GDPH partnered with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service to apply down-well camera technology at no cost to residents of Pittard Road to assess well integrity, and to assist homeowners with well maintenance.
- Information about free breast cancer screening was distributed to residents of Pittard Road.

The public health assessment was distributed to the community and is available to the public upon request by contacting the Chemical Hazards Program at (404) 657-6534. For more information about Public Health Assessments and other activities, please contact:

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