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## C8 levels far above normal, research finds

### ■ Toxin concentration high in Parkersburg-area people

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Thousands of Parkersburg-area residents have significant levels of the toxic chemical C8 in their blood, according to previously confidential results of a landmark community health study.

Blood samples of more than 30,000 people in West Virginia and Ohio contained an average of 123 parts per billion of C8, according to the preliminary data.

That's 25 times the level of C8 that the average American is estimated to have in their blood.

"It's certainly much higher than in the general population," said Dr. Edward Emmett, a University of Pennsylvania researcher who conducted a much smaller C8 blood study of several Ohio communities across the river from Parkersburg.

Emmett tested 324 residents served by the Little Hocking Water Association, whose water supply is believed to be the most contaminated. He found a median C8 level of 340 parts per billion in their blood.

Emmett said, though his study did not definitively link C8 exposure to any specific illnesses in residents, the numbers are still cause for concern.

"There is the issue that it could cause cancer," Emmett said. "It certainly does cause cancer in animals, and it can interfere with the development of the young."

Preliminary data for more than 4,000 Little Hocking customers tested in the broader study found a median C8 concentration of 290 parts per billion.

In other communities, the broader study found residents with a median C8 level in the blood that ranged from 19 parts per billion in Pomeroy, Ohio, to 132 parts per billion among residents served by the Lubeck Public Service District in West Virginia.

Overall, the 30,629 residents examined in the preliminary data had an average C8 level in the blood of 123 parts per billion. The median, or middle, level — which would be less sensitive to extremely high or very low numbers — was 48 parts per billion.

Previously, DuPont reported that a very small study of 12 Parkersburg-area residents found a median C8 concentration of 63 parts per billion.

Federal regulators have not set any limits on C8 emissions, or issued standards on how much is safe for humans to have in their blood. But in 2002, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency launched a priority review of C8's safety after learning that the average American has about 5 parts per billion of C8 in their blood.

C8 has been linked to cancer, reproductive problems and birth defects in animals. Earlier this year, an EPA science advisory group recommended that the chemical be listed as "likely" to cause cancer in humans.

At its Washington Works plant south of Parkersburg, DuPont uses C8 to make Teflon. It is also used to make food packaging and thousands of other consumer and industrial products.

In February 2005, a Wood County judge approved a \$107.6 million settlement of a lawsuit against DuPont on behalf of thousands of residents whose drinking water was allegedly poisoned with C8.

Much of the money is funding a first-ever C8 health study that includes sampling the blood of nearly 70,000 area residents and a review by a three-person expert panel to determine if C8 makes humans sick.

In such situations, it is often difficult to collect health and chemical exposure information on a large enough group of people to do a statistically valid study.

Some of the cancers and other illnesses are rare, and scientists need large sample sizes to perform an accurate assessment. But with money from the DuPont settlement, such a large number of residents have been tested that the study should be able to answer questions about C8's effects.

The new C8 blood data is the first preliminary information from that community health study.

Records describing the data are buried in public files at EPA's headquarters in Washington.

The three-person team of scientists funded by the lawsuit settlement compiled the data more than three months ago, based on information given to it by Brookmar, the company formed to conduct the blood sampling and other health survey research.

In July, the science panel provided that data to lawyers for DuPont and to the lawyers who represented residents who sued the company.

When they did so, the scientists instructed the lawyers not to make the information public.

"Included in the protocols are some data that should under no circumstances be allowed to fall into the hands of the press, general public or general scientific community," the science panel said in a July 19 letter titled, "Note for settling parties."

Dr. Kyle Steenland, an Emory University professor and science panel member, said that the group planned to provide the information to the Parkersburg community during a public meeting sometime this winter.

"They are all just preliminary [numbers] and we didn't want anyone making conclusions from them," Steenland said last week.

Art Maher, one of the coordinators of Brookmar, said that the science panel was not authorized to release the preliminary blood data.

Brookmar was planning to release final results of the blood sampling sometime around the end of the year, Maher said. Broader results of the health study — showing whether C8 is making people sick — won't be available for a year or more after that.

"There is no attempt on our part to stonewall anyone," Maher said. "Brookmar has been very open to the media and we are very thankful for the media's cooperation in getting information out."

The preliminary blood data reached a public file after DuPont lawyers concluded the company would give the information to EPA because of the federal agency's "continuing interest" in C8 and related substances.

In an Aug. 10 letter to EPA, DuPont lawyer Andrea V. Malinowski said the company does not believe any of the preliminary data "is indicative of substantial risk" as that term is defined in the federal Toxic Substances Control Act.

Late last year, DuPont agreed to pay \$10.25 million in fines to settle EPA allegations that company officials hid important information about C8's dangers from the agency.

DuPont did not submit the new C8 blood data to a C8-specific EPA docket where all filings are posted on the Internet and quickly available to the public. Scientists, activists and reporters who are following C8 issues

monitor that docket.

Instead, company officials submitted the information to a general chemical toxicity filing system where records are not posted on the Web for months.

Asked to explain why the company filed the information the way it did, DuPont spokesman Dan Turner said EPA wanted it handled that way.

"We take a very conservative approach when submitting to the EPA," Turner said. "Regardless of whether it is required to be submitted, we err on the side of caution.

"We want to get [the information] to the people most interested in it," Turner said. "EPA can move this if it chooses to another docket."

In its filing with EPA, DuPont did not submit a second set of numbers that it received in July from the science panel.

Last week, Rob Bilott, a lawyer for the residents, submitted that set of numbers to EPA "to ensure completeness of the submission."

That second set of numbers shows how many residents in the C8 health study reported having miscarriages, pre-term births, birth defects and various types of cancer. For example, it shows that 11 percent of reported pregnancies ended in miscarriages.

Science panel members have not yet compared those figures with C8 levels to determine if there is a correlation.

Steenland, the science panel member, said that as his group does various studies, "You'll get pieces of answers along the way, and as we get them, we'll announce them."

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