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DOH, CDC/ATSDR Red Hill survey results assess health effects of contamination

HONOLULU – The Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/ Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) released results of a health assessment survey conducted in January and February 2022 of individuals impacted by petroleum contamination in the Navy's Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam drinking water system.

Eighty-seven percent of over 2,000 survey participants reported at least one new or worsening health symptom following exposure to JP-5 jet fuel in the Navy water system. Thirty-seven percent sought medical care and 17 people reported being hospitalized overnight.

"This incident was unprecedented and impacted the lives and health of thousands of people," said Kathleen Ho, Deputy Director of Environmental Health. "This survey helps to quantify their experiences. We are committed to continuing to work with ATSDR to search for answers on how the Navy's contamination of its drinking water system impacts health and wellbeing."

Many symptoms reported by participants were consistent with exposure to petroleum. Common symptoms involved the nervous system, gastrointestinal system, skin, ear/nose/throat, and mental health. Approximately 80% of symptomatic participants reported at least some improvement in symptoms after switching to an alternative water source. Yet, 75% of symptomatic participants reported symptoms lasting for 30 days or more.

2,289 people from 1,389 households submitted surveys online or in person. Eighty-eight percent were affiliated with the Department of Defense. Over half of survey participants reported signs that their water was contaminated such as a fuel-like smell or taste or a visible oily sheen.

The survey results provide valuable information about the experiences of people affected by the petroleum contamination in the Navy's Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam drinking water system.

However, because the survey was voluntary, it did not capture the full scale of the impacts on people affected by the water contamination.

Initial survey results were published in an article in the [CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report \(MMWR\)](#). DOH continues to work with CDC/ATSDR to learn more about health effects related to this incident.

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