The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) is one of 27 research institutes and centers that comprise the National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The mission of the NIEHS is to discover how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives.

The Superfund Research Program is a NIEHS program that funds university-based multidisciplinary research on human health and environmental issues related to hazardous substances. The central goal is to understand and break the link between chemical exposure and disease.

In the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Human Toxicology, the mission is to train outstanding toxicologists. The program has 30 faculty members, representing 10 departments and five colleges: The College of Public Health, The College of Engineering, The College of Pharmacy, The College of Liberal Arts, and The College of Medicine.

Federal Agencies

The United States Environmental Protection Agency Superfund web page gives you information about sites in your area, what the process is for a cleanup, technical assistance, annual reports, and many other useful tools.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) does public health assessments of waste sites, health consultations concerning specific hazardous substances, health surveillance and registries, response to emergency releases of hazardous substances, applied research in support of public health assessments, information development and dissemination, and education and training concerning hazardous substances.

PCBs and Schools

Related Links [1]
The ABCs of PCBs: A Toxic Threat to America's Schools [13] Senator Markey held congressional hearings on the issue of PCBs in schools and then released this report. It lists key findings and recommendations.

Washington Post Article on Contamination of America's Schools with PCBs [14]

PCBs in Schools NIEHS Webinar [15] this webinar series focused on polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in schools and featured Superfund Research Program grantees, as well as the EPA and international partners.

PCBs and Schools—where community and science come together [16] - The events leading up to community involvement in the 8th International PCB Workshop and the substance of the community engagement aspects of the workshop, in particular the participation by a parent-teacher group, Malibu Unites, is described. The authors also discuss the value of such communication in terms of making important research accessible to those who are most affected by the results and poised to use it and the value of making scientists aware of the important role they play in society in addressing difficult questions that originate in community settings.

Connecticut Schools and PCBs WNPR Article [12] describes the ongoing debate in Connecticut regarding testing and remediating schools and the potential health risks associated with PCBs in schools.

America Unites for Kids [17] is a group of concerned parents, teachers, and supporters that started in the Santa Monica and Malibu Unified School District in California when parents discovered their school had been remediated for PCBs.

New Bedford Harbor
New Bedford Harbor (Massachusetts) is filled with sediment highly contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and heavy metals. From the 1940s until the 1970s, two manufacturing facilities improperly disposed of industrial wastes containing PCBs, contaminating the harbor. The harbor was placed on EPA's National Priorities List [18] in 1982, and continues to require significant time and funding to clean up.

A description of the EPA harbor cleanup efforts can be found at their EPA Cleanups: Communities around New Bedford Harbor [19] website.

The University of Iowa Superfund Research Program, in collaboration with the Boston University Superfund Research Center, has been measuring air quality around the harbor. In a paper [20] published in Environmental Science and Technology Letters Dr. Andre Martinez and Dr. Keri Hornbuckle have demonstrated that airborne polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) concentrations in the air surrounding New Bedford Harbor (NBH) are caused by its water PCB emissions.

More details on the background of the project, as well as the involvement of the community activist group Toxics Action Center [21], can be found in a release [22] by the University of Iowa College of Civil and Environmental Engineering. Additional information can be found in an article [23] in the local newspaper SouthCoastToday.

Local residents of the New Bedford Harbor area are very concerned about the cleanup project. The efforts of the Hands Across the River Coalition [24] is described in an article [25] outlining their annual meeting in April 2017.