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NEWS RELEASE

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Health Evaluations Find No Current Elevated Cancer Risks

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Bureau of Community and Environmental Health (BCEH) has completed two health consultations that do not find elevated cancer risks due to current benzene and chloroform concentrations in the Lewiston/Clarkston Valley.

BCEH will hold a public availability session at the Lewiston City Hall on May 5 from 6 – 8 pm to discuss their findings and answer questions about the health consultations. BCEH also will present their findings at the noontime Lewis Clark Valley Air Quality Advisory Commission meeting May 6, at the Lewiston City Hall.

The health consultations found:

- Chloroform in the outdoor air released from Potlatch after 1992 is not likely to result in a major increased risk of cancer to area residents. In 1992, Potlatch completed a major improvement of its facility, resulting in a decrease of chloroform releases.
- In general, indoor air contaminants such as tobacco smoke, household cleaners or radon in homes could result in a higher cancer risk than outdoor air contaminants. Chloroform concentrations measured in both indoor and outdoor air in residential areas are unlikely to cause any adverse non-cancer public health effects.
- Chloroform air quality data from 1990 shows there may have been an elevated cancer risk to Lewiston/Clarkston residents. Air quality data for years prior to 1990 are not available to evaluate.
- Benzene concentrations measured in residential areas are unlikely to cause any public health effects or a noticeable increased risk of cancer in area residents. Because the type of cancer associated with benzene (leukemia) was not higher in the Lewiston-Clarkston area, it is unlikely that benzene caused the increase in cancer cases.

Data from the Cancer Data Registry of Idaho shows that overall the number of cancer cases is approximately 10 percent higher in the Lewiston/Clarkston area compared to the rest of Idaho. Little data is available on the cancer risks for breathing chloroform, although chloroform in drinking water has been shown to increase a person's risk for bladder, colon, kidney and liver cancers.

Statistics from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System show Nez Perce County residents have a higher incidence of smoking, obesity and sedentary lifestyle than the rest of the Idaho. The Idaho Division of Health and the American Cancer Society offers these guidelines to reduce personal cancer risk:

- Don't smoke.
- Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and eat foods from other plant sources, such as breads, cereals, grain products, rice, pasta, or beans several times a day.
- Limit your intake of high-fat foods, particularly from animal sources.
- Be physically active—at least moderately active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week—and stay within your healthy weight range.
- Limit your consumption of alcoholic beverages, if you drink.
- Early detection is extremely important; schedule regular medical checkups with your healthcare provider.

If you have questions or would like to receive a copy the health consultations, please contact the Bureau of Community and Environmental Health toll-free at 1-866-240-3553.

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(Editors: For more information, contact Chris Corwin, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Boise, 1-866-240-3533.)