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## **Rockton Fire Sample Tests Confirm Air and Water Quality Are Safe**

*Affected residents encouraged to participate in on-going health survey*

**CHICAGO** – As state and local officials continue to work on clean up and remediation efforts after the fire at the Chemtool plant in Winnebago County, samples collected at the site have confirmed air and water quality have not been impacted by the fire and the efforts to extinguish it.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), along with members from the Illinois National Guard (ILNG), have taken a variety of samples including ash, wipe, runoff, and river samples from around the site of the fire as well as in the immediate area. All but one sample, a wipe sample located in close proximity to the Chemtool property, tested below the residential exposure limit. Illinois EPA also collected samples from various locations in the community water supply following the fire. Each of the wells used as source water for Rockton residents were sampled, along with the finished water storage tank located adjacent to the fire. All samples were found to be in compliance with applicable drinking water and groundwater samples. No negative impacts to the community water supply were identified.

“After learning about the Chemtool fire in Rockton, I activated the Illinois National Guard and multiple other state agencies mobilized to provide resources and support to local authorities, working together with the shared goal of preserving the health and safety of community residents,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “As we have in the days following the emergency, my administration will continue to work closely with local stakeholders as the community recovers.”

Water sampling was conducted to determine whether runoff from the incident resulted in water quality impacts to the Rock River. Only one sample on the Rock River exceeded Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) water quality standards, which has been documented by Illinois EPA. The increased level of carbon disulfide would decrease through streamflow. All sample results and further descriptions of sampling are available on the Illinois EPA website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/community-relations/sites/Chemtool/Pages/default.aspx>.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began collecting air samples in the incident area on June 14. The U.S. EPA established a website for its Chemtool response work,

including air quality data, which can be found at [https://response.epa.gov/site/site\\_profile.aspx?site\\_id=15241](https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=15241).

Illinois EPA has worked with the Illinois Department of Public Health and the [Winnebago County Health Department](#) to provide sampling information in an effort to provide further guidance to the public on any potential health impacts.

“As our investigation continues, Illinois EPA remains committed to community residents and local leaders as we look to the remediation phase of this devastating fire,” **said Illinois EPA Director John Kim.** “Illinois EPA is also working closely with Attorney General Raoul’s Office to ensure the full impact of this fire is documented and the company implements an approved plan to remove any hazardous material from the site.”

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has brought in experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (CDC/ATSDR) to augment the efforts of the local health department to monitor and identify potential health effects as a result of the fire.

One tool used in this initiative is an [online health survey](#) issued by the Winnebago County Health Department. Residents are encouraged to complete this survey, or call the established hotline (815-972-7300), to help health officials better serve the community following this event. The local health department asks that the survey be completed by July 15.

State agencies have been collaborative partners with the Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD) to offer assistance, guidance, and recommendations during response efforts. The week of the incident, state agencies often met twice a day to discuss sampling plans, air monitoring results and a path forward for residents.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and Illinois IEPA were instrumental in intervening with local officials and the contractor hired by Chemtool to halt the use of fluorinated firefighting foam to suppress the fire. Continued use of the foam could have led to contamination occurring in soil and groundwater, a health risk for local residents. A breach of foam from firefighting equipment was observed on the Rock River on June 17. U.S. EPA’s on-scene coordinator has stated that booms placed around the foam were successful in containing the breach, and additional samples were taken from the area with no contaminants detected.

Chemtool has offered to reimburse residents for personal expenses and coordinated debris removal services. The IEPA has referred the case to the Illinois Attorney General for potential legal action against the company. This referral cites violations of the Illinois Environmental Protection Act and Illinois Pollution Control Board regulations related to chemical fire and release of pollutants to the atmosphere.

### **About the Rockton Fire:**

Governor JB Pritzker activated the State Emergency Operation Center on Monday, June 14 to mobilize emergency response personnel and operational facilities to monitor the

fire in Winnebago County. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and Illinois IEPA dispatched crews to the area to assist local jurisdictions and expedite assistance and resources, if requested. IEMA also activated its Radiological Emergency Assessment Center (REAC) to monitor the environment and validate plume modeling.

Despite only one request for state assistance (temporary flight restriction) from the local jurisdiction during the response phase of the operation, personnel from the following state agencies and organizations responded to this emergency:

- Illinois Emergency Management Agency
- Illinois State Police
- Illinois Department of Transportation
- Illinois Department of Public Health
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Office of State Fire Marshal
- Illinois National Guard Civil Support Team
- Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS)
- American Red Cross
- Salvation Army

On June 22, at the request of the local government, teams from IEMA provided training for local volunteers in Winnebago County on how to conduct a local damage assessment. This is one of the first critical steps in the recovery phase of any disaster. A local damage assessment is required to apply for federal assistance following any disaster, and can help a local jurisdiction identify unmet needs in the community. The survey identified 221 affected homes with only two of those homes sustaining minor damage as a result of the fire.

To learn more about the Rockton Fire response and status of air, water and soil sampling, visit the [Illinois EPA website](#).