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Contact: Dr. David Garabrant

Telephone: (734) 936 0753

Email: dhg@umich.edu

U-M DIOXIN RESEARCHERS TO MEET WITH COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

ANN ARBOR, Michigan -- University of Michigan scientists studying human exposure to dioxins in the Jackson-Calhoun area are scheduled to meet at 6:00pm on May 10 in the gymnasium of the Hunt Elementary School in Jackson, Michigan, with community representatives to discuss the study.

Dr. David Garabrant, who heads the U-M scientific team, is Professor of Environmental Health Sciences, Professor of Epidemiology, and Associate Professor of Emergency Medicine at the University of Michigan. Dr. Garabrant will give a progress report to the study's Community Advisory Panel. He's expected to focus on the purpose and design of the study, particularly as it relates to research activities in Jackson and Calhoun counties.

The goal of the U-M scientific study is to see whether elevated levels of dioxins in the environment are ending up in the bodies of residents of the Tittabawassee River basin (in Midland and Saginaw counties) and whether these residents have higher levels of dioxins in their blood than persons living in other parts of Michigan, such as Jackson and Calhoun counties. Jackson and Calhoun counties were selected for comparison because the population and types of industry are similar to Midland and Saginaw counties, but there is no known major contamination of the environment with dioxins in these counties.

Dioxins are considered to be toxic chemicals. They can be produced by industrial and combustion activities. There are known to be elevated levels of dioxins in the soil of the Tittabawassee River flood plain and nearby areas that are affected by discharges from the Dow Chemical Company plant in Midland. The role of the Community Advisory Panel is to make sure that the U-M team of scientists is aware of the concerns of the public and answers their questions about the study.

The May 10 meeting is scheduled for 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. It is being held in the gymnasium at the Hunt Elementary School, 1143 North Brown Street, Jackson, Michigan 49202 (map located at: <http://scnc.jps.k12.mi.us/map3/>). The meeting is open to the public.

Panel members include: Mr. Karl Dehn, Director of Marketing and Environment, Battle Creek Unlimited; Mr. Travis Fojtasek, President, Recycle Jackson; Mr. Ron Grimes, Director/Health Officer, Jackson County Health Department; Ms Joni Hatch, Executive Director, American Red Cross Calhoun County; Mr. Ted Havens, Environmental Health Director, Calhoun County Health Department; Dr. Roxanna Hopkins, Assistant Superintendent Jackson Public Schools; and, Ms Susan Milhoan, President, Greater Jackson Chamber of Commerce.

The results of the U-M dioxin study, to be published in late 2006, will not identify individual participants.

The U-M study does not look at health effects, but rather the level of human exposure to dioxins and whether the dioxins are getting into people's bodies. "First we need to get the facts about exposure," Garabrant said. "Then decisions can be made about what to do next."

The Dow Chemical Company is funding the U-M study but has no say over how it is conducted. The study is controlled entirely by the University of Michigan.

Garabrant said, "We will make sure this University of Michigan study is of the highest integrity and independence."

More details about the study are available on its website at: <http://www.umdioxin.org>

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