

FAST FACTS

Northwest Eugene Neighborhood Cancer Investigation

July 2008

Purpose

The Environmental Health Assessment Program (EHAP) has released its third and final report concluding a multi-year investigation into potential cancer clusters in three neighborhoods in north Eugene. The report, "*Cancer Investigation in Three Neighborhoods Surrounding J.H. Baxter & Co.*", discusses the investigation of acute myeloid leukemia (AML) and brain, lung and nasal cancer cases in Eugene's Bethel, River Road and Trainsong neighborhoods. The full report is available at www.healthoregon.org/ehap.

Background

EHAP's original report released in September 2006 looked at cancer cases from 1996-2002 and found no significant increases for the time period. Since then, the Oregon State Cancer Registry (OSCaR) has provided EHAP with cancer data through 2004. Based on the updated data, EHAP released a draft report in May 2007 for public comment. This final report, based on the cancer cases from 1996-2004, addresses the public comments received.

What were EHAP's findings?

Nasal cancer: There was no significant increase in cases for the overall period (1996-2004).

Brain cancer: There were no significant increases for the overall period. During the years 1996-2002, there were a higher number of cases in the north section of the Bethel neighborhood. Since 2002 there have been no new reported cases in this census tract.

Acute myeloid leukemia (AML): There were no significant increases for the overall period. During 2002-2004 there was a significant increase, particularly in the southern section of the Bethel neighborhood. All AML cases had a history of smoking or chemotherapy, which are risk factors for AML.

Lung cancer: From 1996-2004, there was a significant increase in lung cancer cases in the Trainsong neighborhood for this time period. There was also a significant increase in census tract 26 (N. Bethel) from 1996-2003. The majority of cases in Trainsong and N. Bethel had a history of smoking.

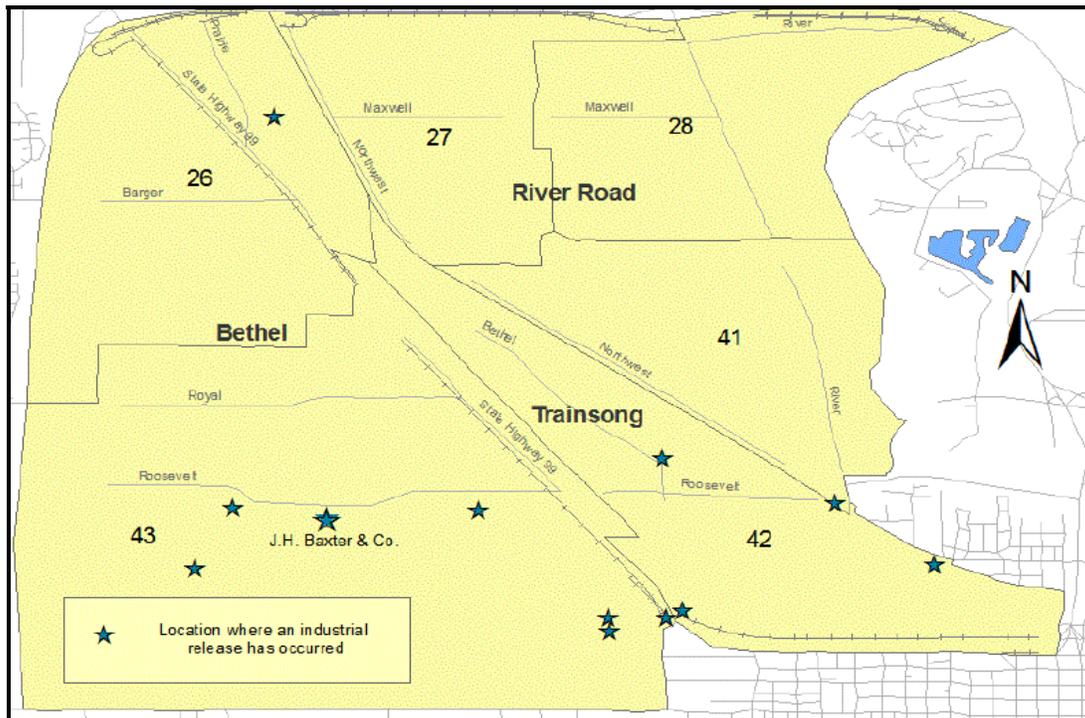
What do these findings mean?

EHAP has identified significant increases (statistical clusters) of cancer in some areas within the three neighborhoods. However, EHAP does not have enough data on environmental contaminants or individuals' personal health history to be able to determine if these clusters are due to exposure to industrial contaminants.

EHAP's Recommendations

Tobacco smoke is a potent environmental contaminant that is a known risk factor for many types of cancer, including lung cancer and AML. This investigation found that tobacco use was a common risk factor for the majority of lung cancer and AML cases in the Trainsong and N. Bethel neighborhoods. *EHAP recommends the implementation or expansion of tobacco prevention and cessation programs in these neighborhoods, and health education and outreach to answer concerns about tobacco use and cancer.*

EHAP recommends a review of air monitoring data in this area to determine if they include data on any contaminants of concern. While these data will not allow EHAP to link observed cases of disease to environmental contamination, they may provide information on whether the residents of these neighborhoods experience exposures that increase their risk for possible health effects.



Where can I get more information?

Complete copies of current and past Northwest Eugene cancer investigation reports are available on the Web at www.healthoregon.org/ehap. For further information, please contact Sujata Joshi, EHAP epidemiologist, Oregon Public Health Division, at 971-673-1213.