

[Donate \(https://goo.gl/yJCEQ2\)](https://goo.gl/yJCEQ2)

▶ WAMC
Morning Edition



[WAMC Northeast Report \(/programs/wamc-northeast-report\)](/programs/wamc-northeast-report)

Hoosick Falls Study Finds More Illnesses Linked To PFOA Exposure

By [KAREN DEWITT \(/PEOPLE/KAREN-DEWITT\)](/PEOPLE/KAREN-DEWITT) • AUG 21, 2018

🐦 [Tweet \(http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?\)](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?)

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fybg6maxq&text=Hoosick%20Falls%20Study%20Finds%20More%20Illnesses'](http://www.tinyurl.com/2Fybg6maxq&text=Hoosick%20Falls%20Study%20Finds%20More%20Illnesses)



Listen

0:00

A Bennington College survey (<http://www.bennington.edu/center-advancement-of-public-action/environment-and-public-action/understanding-pfoa>) of residents in the PFOA contaminated village of Hoosick Falls in eastern New York finds higher rates of illnesses among residents exposed to the toxic substance than did a previous study conducted by the New York State Health Department.

The College's Dr. David Bond says his group went door-to-door to talk to residents about health issues they or their relatives who previously lived in the village may have suffered that have been linked to exposure to PFOA. Perfluorooctanoic Acid, a chemical which was widely used in non-stick Teflon pots and pans, and stain-resistant carpets, leaked from the former Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics plant and contaminated the water supply in Hoosick Falls.

The canvassers found 31 incidences of kidney cancer, 11 cases of testicular cancer, 231 people with thyroid disease, 71 incidents of ulcerative colitis and 35 cases of pregnancy induced hypertension.



“We heard heartbreaking stories of sickness with the six illnesses linked to PFOA exposure,” Bond said. “While residents knew we could not prove that PFOA caused the illness that struck their family, they insisted their loss be counted.”

The Vermont-based college is just across the border from Hoosick Falls, and Bond says parts of Bennington and a portion of Petersburg, New York, have also been affected by PFOA contamination.

“Pregnancies met with trembling uncertainty,” Bond said. “And the strange normality of residents disclosing PFOA levels in their blood.”

He says the fall out also includes plunging home values and abandoned gardens, because people are afraid to eat the food that they grew.

http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wamc/files/styles/x_large/public/201807/Drinking_water

CREDIT WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/DE:BNUTZER:ALEX ANLICKER

Bond was joined Judith Enck, a former EPA administrator under President Obama, who says the survey shows more assistance is needed.

“We are calling for the establishment of a long-term health monitoring program,” Enck said. “Fully-funded by the polluters, not the taxpayers.”

The incidents of the diseases in the Bennington College survey are far higher than what was reported in a more limited study by the New York State Department of Health, released in May 2017. That study looked at existing cancer rate data in the New York State Registry, and limited its scope to current residents within the village border over a 20-year period. It found there was not a statistically significant increase in any of the types of cancers associated with PFOA exposure. It also found that thyroid cancer cases were actually lower than the average rate. Bond says the health department study did not talk to any residents and did not gather data on any other diseases linked to PFOA exposure.

“It raises questions about how comprehensive the data that’s in the cancer registry is,” Bond said.

The Health Department’s Deputy Commissioner for Public Health, Brad Hutton, says he stands by the study, but also welcomes the new information found by Bennington College.

“We think that the studies are complimentary,” Hutton said.

Hutton says he agrees that more research is needed, and says New York is one of nine states asking the Trump administration’s EPA to do a nationwide study on health effects potentially linked to PFOAs.

And he agrees the polluters should pay for longer term health monitoring.

Enck, when she was an EPA administrator, clashed with the state health department over Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo’s administration’s initial reluctance to notify Hoosick Falls residents of potential contamination. Enck was the first environmental official, in October 2015, to tell residents not to drink the water. The Cuomo administration did not create an action plan to address the issue until late January 2016.

Hutton says those days are behind them.

“We remain proud of our commitment, and an aggressive response to address contamination in Hoosick Falls,” said Hutton. “We’re really more concerned with moving forward.”

Cuomo’s opponent in the Democratic primary for governor, Cynthia Nixon, visited Hoosick Falls in April, where he criticized the governor’s handling of the drinking water issue. Enck endorsed Nixon for governor at that time.

Nixon, in a statement, says the Bennington College study shows that Cuomo “is not doing nearly enough to take care of this community.”

Since 2016, New York State and the EPA have declared the village a Superfund site, and residents with contaminated water have received filtration systems. Village officials have already received a partial payment from Saint Gobain and Honeywell International, which formerly owned the site, and are negotiating a future settlement. They have not ruled out a lawsuit.

Meanwhile, Bond says many villagers who are sick are struggling to pay bills for treatments for cancer and other ailments. Some even have GoFundMe websites to raise cash for their expenses. He says those who are well have before them a lifetime of worry.

The search for a new water supply is ongoing. The state health department is still analyzing blood samples and is conducting a second round of blood tests for more 800 residents.

TAGS: [HOOSICK FALLS PFOA \(/TERM/HOOSICK-FALLS-PFOA\)](#) [PFOA \(/TERM/PFOA\)](#)

[BENNINGTON COLLEGE \(/TERM/BENNINGTON-COLLEGE\)](#)

 [Tweet \(http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?)

[url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fybg6maxq&text=Hoosick%20Falls%20Study%20Finds%20More%20Illnesses%](http://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tinyurl.com%2Fybg6maxq&text=Hoosick%20Falls%20Study%20Finds%20More%20Illnesses%20)

Important Update

When you log in with Disqus, we process personal data to facilitate your authentication and posting of comments. We also store the comments you post and those comments are immediately viewable and searchable by anyone around the world.

I agree to Disqus' [Terms of Service](#)

I agree to Disqus' processing of email and IP address, and the use of cookies, to facilitate my authentication and posting of comments, explained further in the [Privacy Policy](#)

Proceed

RELATED CONTENT

[\(/post/hoosick-falls-mayor-rob-allen-discusses-new-partial-settlement\)](#)