

Dear colleagues,

A great deal of unrest and uncertainty has arisen concerning the investigations being conducted at the NATO Industrial Site (NIC) at Brunssum. Through this e-mail, I would like to inform you about the latest state of affairs.

Soil investigation at Brunssum

In March of this year, there has been spoken about the soil and groundwater at the Brunssum site that had been found to have been contaminated. This has created serious unrest. To dispel the current unrest, and to be able to answer questions concerning the situation that has arisen, the Limburg Regional Health Service (GGD) is currently carrying out an investigation, which focuses on ascertaining the safety of working at a number of locations. This extra investigation is being carried out to establish beyond doubt the presence of any hazardous substances and, should these be found, to determine what the implications may be for public health. The investigation has been instituted as a direct result of the unrest among employees. To date, there are no indications to suggest that employees have been exposed to dangerous levels of hazardous substances as a result of soil or groundwater contamination.

Brunssum and Eysgelshoven Defence sites will be the first to be investigated. The remaining POMS (Prepositioned Organizational Materiel Sites) sites at Vriezenveen, Coevorden and Ter Apel will be looked at subsequently. Limburg Regional Health Service have received and accepted the assignment commissioned by the Ministry of Defence. The GGD expects to be able to present the results by the end of 2014.

Steering Group

A steering group has been formed comprising representatives from the Government Buildings Agency, the Royal Netherlands Army Staff, the Defence Health Care Organisation, the Directorate of Communication, the Principal Directorate of Personnel and the Principal Directorate of Policy. The recent 'EenVandaag' television programme has brought the ongoing investigations into the use of hazardous substances and the contamination found so far into sharper focus. This has led to the decision to bring all parties involved to the table. The steering group has instituted two separate investigations.

CARC (Chemical Agent Resistant Coating)

Parallel to the GGD examination, research is also being conducted into the use of CARC. This is the result of reports by former employees at POMS sites in the Netherlands who claim to have incurred health problems resulting from exposure to hazardous substances. It is yet to be determined whether and in which diseases a causal link can be shown to exist between the clinical pictures and the (extent of) exposure to certain hazardous components.

Below you will find a number of frequently asked questions and the answers to them. These FAQs will go into greater detail regarding the contamination found at Brunssum. As soon as we know more or when the findings of the investigations become available, you will of course be informed. If you have any further questions, please address them to your immediate superior. Although the steering group will do all in its power to answer any questions, it cannot anticipate the results of the investigations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the nature of the contamination found at the Brunssum site?

The topsoil has been contaminated by heavy metals and the groundwater shows pollution by PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons), volatile aromatics and mineral oils. This Defence facility is located at the spoil tip of the former Dutch State Mine Hendrik. Given this fact, and given coal mine

production processes, it cannot be ruled out that contaminants from the production process came into contact with the spoil tip, with soil contamination as a possible result.

Since when has the Defence organisation known of this contamination?

At the end of October 2013, the Defence organisation was informed by the United States Army Garrison (USAG) of the research results of an investigation carried out at Kranenpool 1 (an NIC site). The report, dated 14 July 2013, had been commissioned by USAG Schinnen.

What are the consequences of (possible) soil contamination and groundwater pollution, and how would that spread to the environment, ground water and drinking water supplies? What is being done to prevent this?

It is impossible to say at this stage what the consequences might be of potential soil and/or groundwater pollution. What we do know is that there is unlikely to be any risk of direct exposure. Further investigations, including soil surveys, are expected to shed more light on the current situation (scope and risk assessment). An assessment can subsequently be made of whether and how far contamination may spread and the relevant risks. Based on the information currently available, the heavy metal contamination is almost entirely confined to the site's topsoil. The contamination is considered to be immobile (it cannot spread).

The groundwater pollution from PAHs, volatile aromatics and mineral oils is confined to a level well below the spoil tip, at a distance of between 13 and 20 meters below surface level. This means that there is no risk of direct exposure. As far as is known, there are no drinking water facilities in the immediate surroundings of the spoil tip of the former Hendrik mine. The nearest groundwater extraction area with a well field is located in Schinveld, at a distance of approximately 3 km to the northeast of the site under examination (and not downstream from it). Follow-up research will provide more insight into the question of whether and how the contamination is spreading.

Is the health of employees and local residents at risk?

Given the location of the research site within the confines of a designated industrial complex without residential function, and given the current information of the USAG report, a risk to public health is unlikely.

Why have warning signs been put up at the Brunssum premises?

There are no posters at the Brunssum NIC site warning that the site is closed because of toxic substances. There are, however, stickers carrying the warning 'asbestos'. This is standard procedure for materials that have been listed as containing asbestos. This procedure is to ensure that these materials, in the event of damage or renovation, are treated accordingly.

To whom do I direct my questions or comments?

For any questions or comments, you should address them to your immediate superior. He or she will register them and pass them on to the steering group.