

Biolab Incident 2024, Frequently Asked Questions



1. What are the chemicals being detected by EPA air monitoring?

- Chlorine, chloramine and chlorine compounds
- EPA air quality detectors are monitoring the following as well:
 - Carbon Monoxide
 - Hydrogen Chloride
 - Phosgene

2. Is the water safe?

Rockdale County's drinking water remains safe. Water samples are being tested three times daily, and all results have returned safe levels. Streams downstream from the Biolab facility do not feed into the Hanes Watershed, the source of Rockdale County's drinking water.

3. Why is the shelter in place only for the evening?

In the evening atmospheric inversion is occurring trapping air and pollution, and the harmful chemicals closer to the ground. This causes unhealthy spikes in air quality for people not sheltering in place in the evening.

Why is it different than during the day? During the day, the sun heats the Earth's surface, warms the air near the ground. At night, with no sunlight, the ground loses heat and the air near the surface cools. The air higher up doesn't cool as fast, so you end up with cooler air near the ground creating inversion.

The recommended shelter in place is 7pm as the sun is beginning to set.

4. What are the possible reactions to chlorine compounds?

Smoke that contains chlorine compounds can cause various symptoms including irritation of the eyes and airways, coughing, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chest tightness, a scratchy throat, irritated sinuses, headaches, stinging eyes, or a runny nose. People with heart disease might experience chest pain, palpitations, shortness of breath, or fatigue. People with lung disease may not be able to breathe as deeply or as vigorously as usual, and they may experience symptoms such as coughing, phlegm, chest discomfort, wheezing, and shortness of breath.

5. If you are feeling sick, what do you do?

It's important to protect your health from the plume that contains chlorine compounds.

Here's what you can do:

- Stay indoors and avoid outdoor activities.
- Keep your home's air clean by closing windows and doors. Use your air conditioner only if it recirculates indoor air.
- Older adults, children, and those with weakened immune systems should limit time outside to avoid smoke.
- If you have asthma or lung issues, follow your doctor's advice on managing your condition.
- While chlorine levels are currently safe, follow local emergency guidelines. If you experience symptoms, contact your healthcare provider or the Georgia Poison Center at 404-856-6252.