



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: AIR SAMPLING IN TONTITOWN, AR

WHAT IS AN ENVIRONMENTAL ODOR?

An environmental odor is any smell you notice outside. Some odors are pleasant and others are not. These smells can come from many things, including cars, animals, nature, or businesses like manufacturing shops.

ARE ENVIRONMENTAL ODORS HARMFUL?

Most outdoor smells are not strong enough to cause serious health problems. But low levels of odor can cause symptoms, especially in people who are sensitive. Some common symptoms include:

- Headache
- Nausea or dizziness
- Sore throat, coughing, or wheezing
- Trouble sleeping
- Watery eyes or a stuffy nose

Unpleasant odors can also lead to stress. This may cause feelings like worry, sadness, or frustration, especially if the smell has bothered you before or if you think it's harmful. These symptoms may also be caused by allergies, stress, or other health conditions. Talk to your doctor if you are affected.

HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

You can reduce exposure to odors by:

- Staying indoors if odors cause allergy, asthma, or lung problems
- Exercising indoors instead of outdoors when odors are strong
- Leaving the area for a short time, if possible
- Using air purifiers inside your home, if available

WHAT ARE VOLATILE ORGANIC COMPOUNDS (VOCs)?

VOCs are common gases released from certain products or activities. You may be exposed to VOCs when you:

- Pump gas
- Use products like paint thinners, pesticides, or cleaners
- Burn wood, gas, or coal
- Use scented candles
- Smoke or breathe in secondhand smoke
- Live near highways or manufacturing shops

CAN VOCs AFFECT MY HEALTH?

Yes, the health effects depend on:

- The type of VOC
- How long you are around it
- How much you breathe in

Breathing in a lot of VOCs in a short time can make you feel dizzy, sleepy, or confused. Being around certain VOCs for a long time may cause more serious health problems.

CAN MEDICAL TESTS SHOW EXPOSURE TO VOCs OR ODORS?

Some medical tests can show recent exposure to certain chemicals or substances, like benzene or other VOCs. But:

- These tests only work if done soon after exposure (within hours or a few days)
- They may not be available at all doctors' offices
- They cannot tell where the exposure came from

If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor.

CONTACT

Email ADH at **ADH.TS@arkansas.gov**

This fact sheet was made possible by a cooperative agreement [program # CDC-RFA-TS-23-0001] from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the Arkansas Department of Health's Environmental Epidemiology Section and do not necessarily represent the official views of the ATSDR, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.