



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MINNESOTA TACONITE WORKERS HEALTH STUDY

# Respiratory Health Survey of Taconite Workers & Spouses

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# University of Minnesota research team

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# Background

- University of Minnesota asked by the State to study whether exposure to dust from the taconite industry is harmful to workers and spouses



# Why we're here

- To explain how the survey will work
- We want your feedback and comments
- We need your help encouraging workers and retirees to participate



# Respiratory health exams begin this summer

- Identifying scientific sample of current & former workers from employment records of mining companies
- Conduct respiratory health exams of 1,200 current and former workers and 800 spouses
- Plan is to complete health surveys by end of 2010



# Who will be asked to participate?

- Selection is based on employment records from multiple companies and includes:
  - A range of ages
  - A variety of years of working in the taconite industry
  - Workers from different Range locations



# You may receive a letter from the U of M asking you to participate

- If you are contacted, it is critical that you call to schedule your appointment as soon as possible
- Ensures a successful study and timely completion



# Respiratory exam conducted at Virginia Regional Medical Center

- Exam itself will take approximately 2 hours
- We will reimburse mileage or provide transportation if needed



# Clinic appointment includes:

- Health history questionnaire (mailed to you before your visit, completed at home, and checked with you at your visit)
- Two types of lung function/breathing tests
- Chest x-ray
- Physical exam and blood sample



# Why should you participate?

- This is a large, important study that will determine whether lung conditions may be associated with exposure to dust from taconite operations
- Your findings may assure current & future mine workers that they are working in a safe environment



# Additional benefits...

- Tests may reveal a medical condition that you need treatment for
- Test results may aid your doctor if you need follow-up care



# What happens after the clinic visit?

- You receive a summary of your results
- Test results sent to your doctor with your permission
- If you need a doctor, we will help you find one



# Concerns & Questions

Why are some spouses included?

- Spouses may have been exposed to dust brought home on workers' clothing



# Why is this taking so long since we first heard about the study?

- We need to collect the information about workers from multiple companies
- We need to put procedures in place to ensure your privacy and confidentiality
- Needed time to set-up testing procedures, facilities and medical professionals to conduct the survey



# What is happening now?

- Collaboration with mining companies, Virginia Regional Medical Center, health care professionals, unions, retirees, legislators and many community members
- Setting up the selection process and medical exams
- Holding additional public meetings like this



# Will my company know I am participating?

- No—the study team will not reveal who participates
- Individual names will not be reported in the results
- The only person who will receive your exam results will be you and your personal physician *and only with your consent*



# What if I am *not* asked to participate but I have health concerns?

- We will assist any current or former miners who are not selected
- We are working with local doctors so they know the types of tests we are providing
- They may be able to administer these same tests if needed
- For more assistance or concerns, call our toll-free number 1-888-840-7590



# Don't we already know there's a link between taconite work and health?

- No. The work needed to establish a link between the 58 mesothelioma cases and mining has not been done
- No one study has addressed all the health and risk questions related to taconite mining this study will cover



# This survey is one part of the Minnesota Taconite Workers Health Study

- Also looking at causes of death among workers, cases of mesothelioma, cancer and other respiratory disease
- Looking at the air and environment by conducting air sampling at workplace sites



# We need your help!

- Let your fellow workers and retirees know they may receive a U of M letter
- Encourage those contacted to participate in the study
- You will be part of a large, comprehensive study of health in the taconite industry
- We can't do it without you!



# Next steps

- Look for future public meetings and more detailed info over the next few months
- Your questions & comments are welcome
- Call our toll-free number 1-888-840-7590
- Also, see our website:  
[www.taconiteworkers.umn.edu](http://www.taconiteworkers.umn.edu)

**Thank you!**

