

June 5, 2026

Washington State Department of Health
PO Box 47890
Olympia, WA 98504-7890
360-236-4501

RE: Request to Reconcile DOH Guidance DOH 334-553 with Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) 2024 Port Townsend Findings — V_1.13

Dear Secretary of Health,

I am writing as a Port Townsend resident to request that the Washington State Department of Health reconcile a direct and documented contradiction between its own published community guidance and a 2024 federal scientific finding specific to Port Townsend — and to issue updated, accurate public health guidance.

The Contradiction:

Washington State DOH published DOH 334-553 in July 2024: 'Most environmental odors, such as those caused by a paper mill, are RARELY AT LEVELS THAT CAN HARM YOUR HEALTH.'

In the same year, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducted a Port Townsend-specific investigation and found: hydrogen sulfide, methyl mercaptan, dimethyl sulfide, and dimethyl disulfide were measured near PTPC ABOVE US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chronic health reference concentrations — meaning long-term exposure poses a documented health risk.

Same year. Same community. Opposite conclusions.

Requests to the Department of Health:

- Issue a formal written response acknowledging the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) 2024 Port Townsend findings and clarifying whether DOH 334-553 accurately reflects current scientific knowledge for this community.
- Issue updated community health guidance for Port Townsend accurately reflecting the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) finding — informing residents, healthcare providers, and local officials that Total Reduced Sulfur (TRS) compound levels near PTPC exceed US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) chronic health reference concentrations.

- Coordinate with Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) for a follow-up Port Townsend exposure investigation — particularly in light of the Longview disaster demonstrating the catastrophic potential of the same white liquor chemistry.
- Assess whether populations most at risk — people with heart or lung disease, older adults (42.6% of Jefferson County residents are over 65), and children — are receiving adequate and accurate public health information.

When DOH guidance contradicts a specific federal scientific finding, the community is left without information it needs to protect its health. I am asking DOH to correct the record.

Respectfully,

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