

# **Georgia Department of Natural Resources**

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## **For Immediate Release**

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The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) has issued a consent order requiring the operator of a fire-damaged Athens-Clarke County chemical plant to properly clean up the area and to also take steps to insure that no further runoff damages nearby creeks and rivers.

The J&J Chemical Co. caught fire July 28 and runoff from the fire carried toxic chemicals and a blue dye used in toilet bowl cleaners into Trail Creek and a tributary. The runoff is blamed for a major fish kill, but did not threaten drinking water supplies. Trail Creek flows into the North Oconee and Oconee rivers.

Under the terms of the order, the company has agreed to the following:

- Monitor water quality in Trail Creek twice weekly (Monday and Wednesday) at locations specified by EPD until contaminants are no longer detected.
- Secure the plant site to insure that rainwater does not contact burned debris and contaminated materials.
- Company will continue to capture, containerize, and properly identify and treat all runoff from the plant site.
- Company will begin demolition of the building, identify the waste contents and properly dispose of all solid waste.
- Company will immediately pump contaminated water from Trail Creek and filter it through activated carbon filters at Olympic Drive and Athena Drive and continue treatment unless notified by EPD.

A consent order is a type of enforcement action used by EPD to address environmental damage and to insure that it is properly cleaned up.

EPD also has received results from the latest round of water testing and they show that water quality continues to improve. One of six water samples taken from the North Oconee and Oconee rivers contained para-dichlorobenzene at 14 parts per billion (ppb), which is well below water quality standards for healthy aquatic life. Lab tests show the other five samples did not contain the chemical.

More test results from creek water should be available early next week. EPD recommends that people and pets stay out of the creek until contaminants from the fire are no longer detected in the water.

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