

# LakeFront Hartwell

<http://www.lakefronthartwell.com/news29672/pee-dee-area-physicians-call-on-dhec-to-test-human.shtml>

## **Pee Dee Area Physicians Call On DHEC to Test Humans for Mercury**

FLORENCE, SC - In light of mercury threats to the Pee Dee region, area physicians will gather outside the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Florence offices at 12:15 p.m. on Thursday, December 6 to request formally that DHEC begin testing human populations in the Pee Dee region for mercury contamination...

FLORENCE, SC - In light of mercury threats to the Pee Dee region, area physicians will gather outside the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Florence offices at 12:15 p.m. on Thursday, December 6 to request formally that DHEC begin testing human populations in the Pee Dee region for mercury contamination.

A recent investigative series in the Charleston Post & Courier documented alarming and dangerous levels of mercury in South Carolina citizens who eat fish from the state's mercury contaminated rivers, including the Pee Dee.

DHEC has stated that the agency will not begin testing without a formal request from a physician. Two weeks ago, Florence resident and neurosurgeon Dr. Ken Kammer submitted a request, and since that time two other physicians, Dr. Tim Dancy and Dr. Bernetha George, have submitted supporting letters calling for DHEC to test humans for mercury.

Physicians will address the human health risks of mercury and ask that DHEC rescind the draft air permit it granted Santee Cooper allowing the utility to emit 138 pounds of toxic mercury a year. One pound of methyl mercury is enough to contaminate 500,000 pounds of fish tissue.

At 1 p.m. physicians and health professionals will be available for a statewide conference call to discuss the letter and health issues.

Visuals include signs and maps of mercury levels in Pee Dee region.

According to [DHEC's website](#), The Pee Dee River Basin (also referred to as the Great Pee Dee River) encompasses 27 watersheds and 3,425 square miles within South Carolina, excluding the Lynches River and Black River Basins. The Pee Dee River flows across the Sandhills region to the Upper and Lower Coastal Plain regions and into the

Coastal Zone region. Of the approximately two million acres, 36.0% is forested land, 23.0% is agricultural land, 19.6% is scrub/shrub land, 16.5% is forested wetland (swamp), 2.5% is urban land, 1.3% is water, 1.0% is nonforested wetland (marsh), and 0.1% is barren land. The urban land percentage is comprised chiefly of the Cities of Florence, Darlington, Bennettsville, and Dillon.

WHAT: Physicians request DHEC to test humans for mercury  
WHERE: DHEC offices, 145 E Cheves St, Florence, SC 29506  
WHEN: Thursday, 6 December, 12:15 PM