

# Choosing a Safe Location for Your Child Care Business



Selecting the right location for your child care business is essential for success. There's more to consider than cost and classroom size – what about the safety of the location? Having to shut down your business due to a storm, chemical leak, or unsafe drinking water would be frustrating and costly. Minimize the risk to your business by carefully considering your location.

## Harmful chemicals

We use chemicals every day to help us grow food, control pests, drive cars, and manufacture new products. But some of these chemicals can be dangerous. Chemicals in the air we breathe, water we drink, or things we touch can potentially cause harm. Also, children are usually more sensitive to chemical exposure than adults. Keep children safe by considering chemical hazards before you commit to a location.

Chemicals usually spread out from where they are being used. Chemicals can move through soil, water, and air. Small amounts of chemicals usually aren't a problem, but large amounts of chemicals may cause health issues.



**See the checklist of recommended questions at the back!**



[www.healthy.arkansas.gov](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov)



**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION



[dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood](http://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/office-of-early-childhood)

## Chemicals from previous uses of the property

What was the property used for in the past? Dangerous chemicals might still be in the building, soil, or water. Many uses like factories, warehouses, farms, and dry cleaners can leave chemicals behind. Even a previous owner who smoked cigarettes inside can leave chemicals behind on walls and carpets.

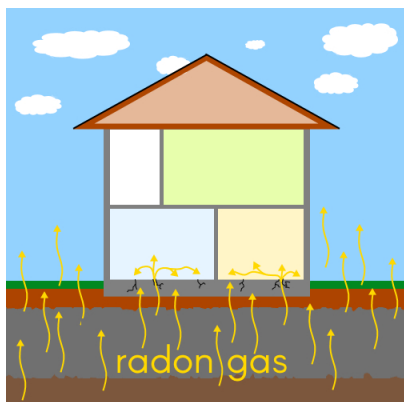


## Chemicals from nearby businesses, highways, and railroads

Are there nearby businesses using chemicals? If the building shares a ventilation system with a business like a nail salon, children could be exposed to high levels of chemicals in the air. Underground storage tanks from a gas station could leak and expose children to gasoline in playground soils. Chemicals being moved in trucks or railcars could spill in an accident.

## Chemicals used in construction

Before 1978, lead was used in some paints in the United States. We know now that lead can cause brain damage, especially in young children. Asbestos, a material that can cause lung cancer, was widely used in construction before 1977 and is still in limited use today. Removing or fully enclosing materials containing lead or asbestos will help keep children safe.



## Naturally occurring chemicals

Some chemicals, like arsenic and radon, occur naturally in certain areas underground. Radon is a radioactive gas that you can't see or smell but can cause lung cancer. Radon can enter a building through the foundation.

# Phase I Environmental Site Assessments

Environmental Site Assessments are a tool to help property owners. They can help protect property owners from legal liability if there are dangerous chemicals left on the property from previous owners. Many banks will require a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment before giving a loan to buy property.

Typically, a new business owner will hire a private environmental consultant to do the assessment following industry standards. A Phase I assessment includes a site inspection and a review of property records and maps. The environmental consultant can get this information from state agencies as long as they are an Arkansan business or working on behalf of an Arkansan. If potential concerns are found in the Phase I assessment, a follow-up Phase II or Phase III assessment may be done.

Even if your bank doesn't require a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, getting one done is a smart decision because it can protect your business. You will also be able to rely on the skills of your hired environmental consultant when dealing with any issues that might come up.

**Professionals that can help you start your business safely include:**

- ✓ Realtors
- ✓ Lawyers
- ✓ Insurance agents
- ✓ Architects
- ✓ Certified contractors
- ✓ Environmental consultants



***Starting your business the right way will save you time and money later!***





# Drinking water

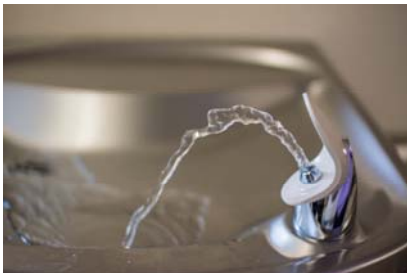
At your child care business, you'll use water for drinking, cooking, and hand washing. Make sure that you have good quality drinking water at the location you select. Under the Arkansas Plumbing Code, your tap water must be potable (drinkable). Unsafe drinking water may cause health problems like diarrhea, brain damage, or cancer.

## Public drinking water systems

Most Arkansans use water from a public drinking water system. Customers pay a water bill in exchange for high-quality drinking water that's delivered to the property. These systems are tested for harmful chemicals by the water system managers.

The property owner is still responsible for the quality of the pipes within the building. Some older buildings have pipes made of lead and copper. These metals can sometimes move from the pipes into drinking water, especially when the water is hot.

- ✓ If you choose a location built before 1986, it's a good idea to have the plumbing checked for lead pipes. Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/basic-information-about-lead-drinking-water>
- ✓ Always use cold water from the tap for drinking and cooking.



## Semi-Public drinking water wells

Some rural locations use water from a private well. If you use private well water for your business, that is considered a Semi-Public drinking water system.

- ✓ If you choose a location with a well, be prepared to meet the requirements for a Semi-Public drinking water system. This includes: a well plan review, a disinfection system, and annual testing of the drinking water. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health Engineering Department at 501-661-2623 or [safewater@arkansas.gov](mailto:safewater@arkansas.gov) for more information.
- ✓ Semi-Public water wells must not serve more than 24 people a day on average (including children, staff, and family members in the home). Wells that serve more than 24 people must become a Public water system.
- ✓ Use bottled water when preparing infant formula. Babies are especially sensitive to a chemical called nitrate that's often found in rural wells.

# Disasters and accidents

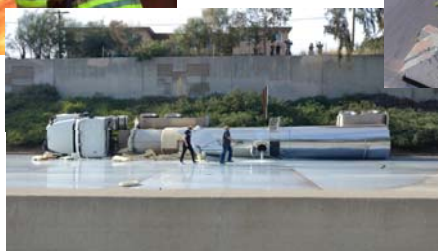
Consider potential disasters and accidents when choosing a location. You'll want to be prepared for emergencies and to purchase the right types of insurance for your area.

## Find out what types of disasters might happen in your area

- ✓ **Earthquake damage:** <https://www.geology.arkansas.gov/geohazards/earthquakes-in-arkansas.html>
- ✓ **Flooding:** <https://msc.fema.gov/portal>
- ✓ **Tornados:** <https://hazards.fema.gov/nri/tornado>
- ✓ **Wildfires:** <https://www.southernwildfirerisk.com/map/index/public>
- ✓ **Chemical transportation accidents:** these can happen near highways and railroads.
- ✓ **Arkansas Nuclear One emergency:**  
<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/nuclear-planning-and-response>.  
Click the Emergency Instructions Arkansas Nuclear One link. There is a map on page 8 showing the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone near Russellville, AR.
- ✓ **Snow/ice storms, heat waves, and high winds** can happen anywhere! Think about things like road access, downed trees, and loss of electricity.

## Ask for local help

- ✓ Ask your local fire marshal about fire prevention and safety.
- ✓ Get tips from your county emergency management coordinators.



# Who do I contact for help?

## General Chemicals

Arkansas Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology  
501-661-2232, [adh.ts@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.ts@arkansas.gov)

*What we do:* Analyze chemical information to identify potential risks to human health

## Lead

Arkansas Department of Health, Lead-Based Paint Program

<http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/lead-based-paint-program>

501-671-1472

*What we do:* Provide information and help you find Lead-Based Paint licensed companies

## Radon

Arkansas Department of Health, Radon Program

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/radon-gas>

501-661-2232, [adh.epi.radon@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.epi.radon@arkansas.gov)

*What we do:* Provide guidance on self-testing, help you find a certified professional

## Mold

Arkansas Department of Health

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/mold-hazards>

501-661-2232

*What we do:* Provide information on mold and recommend cleaning methods

## Private Drinking Water Wells

Arkansas Department of Health, Engineering

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/drinking-water-plan-review>

501-661-2623, [safewater@arkansas.gov](mailto:safewater@arkansas.gov)

*What we do:* Provide guidance for wells and drinking water

## Public Sewage and Septic Systems

Arkansas Department of Health, Onsite Wastewater Program

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/onsite-wastewater>

501-661-2171, [adh.ehs@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.ehs@arkansas.gov)

*What we do:* Provide guidelines, help you find an authorized septic system designer and Help you take a well water sample for testing

## Asbestos

Arkansas Division of Environmental Quality, Asbestos Section

<https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/>

501-682-0718

*What they do:* Help you find certified consultants and contractors to test and fix asbestos

# Optional Checklist

## Recommended questions to ask property owners before purchasing or signing a lease

### Has a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment ever been prepared for this property?

- Yes** – Great, get a copy! The Arkansas Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology at 501-661-2232 will help you understand the results. If there were additional Phase II or III assessments done, get a copy of those as well.
- No** – The best thing to do is to hire an environmental consultant to do a Phase I Environmental Assessment. Your bank may require that a Phase I assessment be done before they will issue you a loan.

### When was the building(s) constructed?

- After 1978** – Good.
- Before 1978** – Caution! There may be lead-based paint or asbestos.
  - ✓ Have a certified lead based paint consultant test the building before you commit. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Lead-Based Paint Program at 501-671-1472 for more information.
  - ✓ Have the building inspected by an accredited asbestos inspector before you commit. Learn more at <https://www.adeq.state.ar.us/air/program/>.

### Has the property ever been used by a business that used chemicals? (Dry cleaners, gas stations, auto repair, painting, metalworking, shooting range, farming, landfill, factory, mill, funeral home, or other. You might see clues on site, like old metal drums, machine parts, piles of junk, a loading dock, or other.)

- No** – Good.
- Not sure** – Caution! Get more information before you commit. Town planners, tax assessors, and fire marshals can help you get historical records.
- Yes** – Caution! These businesses may have left chemicals behind. Get more details (when, who, what products or chemicals) and contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology at 501-661-2232 for help, or hire an environmental consultant to do a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment.

### Are there nearby businesses that currently use chemicals? (Dry cleaners, gas stations, auto repair, painting, metalworking, shooting range, farming, landfill, factory, mill, funeral home, or other.)

- No** – Good.
- Not sure** – Caution! Get more information before you commit.
- Yes** – Caution! Chemicals might be moving onto the property in air, water, or soil. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Environmental Epidemiology at 501-661-2232 for recommendations.

**Has the building(s) ever been tested for radon?**

- Yes, with results below the action level** – Good.
- No** – Have this test done before you commit. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Radon Program at 501-661-2232 for guidance on purchasing a test kit or hiring a certified radon measurement professional.
- Yes and high levels of radon** – Caution! Get help with follow-up tests and, if needed, a mitigation system. Call the Arkansas Department of Health, Radon Program at 501-661-2232 for guidance and a list of qualified radon professionals.

**Where does the drinking water come from?**

- Public drinking water supply** – Great! Public drinking water systems are regulated and tested to ensure safety.
- Private well** – Caution! Private wells can be contaminated from outside sources.
  - ✓ Have the water tested by a laboratory before you commit, and budget for testing the water annually. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Environmental Health Protection at 501-661-2171 for more information.
  - ✓ Have the well professionally inspected and disinfected before you open up your business. Contact the Arkansas Department of Health, Engineering at 501-661-2623 for more information.

**Where does sewage go?**

- Municipal wastewater** – Good.
- Septic system** – Caution! Septic systems require upkeep and are usually designed for standard household use. An updated or enlarged system may be needed to meet the demands of your child care facility.
  - ✓ Find out how old the system is and when it was last serviced. Check the design to make sure that your child care business won't overload the system's capacity. Your local county health Environmental Specialist can help you find the permit on file.
  - ✓ Include the costs of proper maintenance in your budgeting.

*The best way to protect your business is to ask all these questions before you commit to a location. Take good notes and then ask for expert help as needed.*

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**Arkansas Department of Health**  
**Environmental Epidemiology**  
 501-661-2232  
[adh.ts@arkansas.gov](mailto:adh.ts@arkansas.gov)

