



Downey Flu: How an L.A. Suburb Became One of the Most Toxic Towns

By Sena Christian, AlterNet

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In July 2007, Gail Shephard quit her job as an orthopedic technician. Her weakened muscles had made it too difficult for her to wash her hair or even pull up her pants in the morning. Now, Shephard, 55, takes two pain medications and Mirapex, a pill to treat Parkinson's disease, each day.

"I don't do anything," Shephard said. "I sit in the same chair. I dread getting up in the morning, it's so painful. I can't walk and I hold onto the walls to go the bathroom and back. And that is my entire day."

But Shephard doesn't have Parkinson's disease and doctors don't quite know how to diagnose her. She knows, however, that her ailments began shortly after February 2006, when she transferred to the new Kaiser Permanente facility built on the site of a former NASA plant, which comprised 160 acres of land in the Los Angeles suburb of Downey, Calif.

Shephard would come to find that she wasn't alone in her unexplained health problems. Several other former employees of the Kaiser Downey Medical Center and Downey Studios -- a film-production center also located at the site -- claim that they too became ill as a result of exposure to toxic contaminants left over from seven decades of military and aerospace research and manufacturing at the old NASA Downey Industrial Plant. The ailments have become so common that workers there coined a nickname: "Downey flu."

As for Shephard, the move to Downey aggravated her tendon and joint pain. Soon after, her feet and ankles ached: "My foot was so sensitive I couldn't put a blanket on it or let water touch it. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what."

That was only the beginning. Shephard had difficulty breathing, and experienced back spasms, dizzy spells and migraine headaches. Before long, she was urinating blood. Now, she has central nervous system damage and most of her body has turned numb.

Those who suffer from "Downey flu" claim that the city of Downey and Industrial Realty Group, which operate what's now called Downey Landing, failed to properly remediate the property or notify workers of mold, fungi and other toxic residue. The U.S. Department of Labor has identified 260 chemicals found at the NASA site, including arsenic, lead, uranium, plutonium, trichloroethylene and chromium.

For environmental health advocates, Downey illustrates the potential harm in redeveloping old industrial sites, and the loophole that allows for development to

occur before hazardous substances are completely removed. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, better known as Superfund or CERCLA, former U.S. military and industrial sites can be purchased by developers who promise to clean up the land. But some sickened workers question the wisdom of allowing the privatization of remediation efforts, which removes the responsibility from the government and places it into the hands of developers eager to start capitalizing on their investment.

In the Superfund program's nearly 30-year history, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has identified tens of thousands of hazardous waste sites. Upon some of these now sit office buildings, shopping malls, houses and schools, often without the knowledge of the people who live and work there. One such place -- Downey Landing -- boasts the film studio, Kaiser facility, Columbia Memorial Space Science Learning Center, a shopping center and a public park.

"They never told us [Downey] was a Boeing-NASA site," said Shephard, from her home in Norwalk. "Or that it was a brownfield."

Downey Flu's Impact

For 18 years, Shephard worked at Kaiser Permanente, starting out as a surgical clinical assistant before training to become an orthopedic technician. She originally worked at the Kaiser in Bellflower, Calif., before a new facility was constructed in nearby Downey.

For 70 years, this particular property served as a base for American aircraft and aerospace industries. Military-industrial use began in 1929 and personnel built bombers there during World War II. Later, North American Aviation conducted nuclear power and rocket propulsion research. NASA took over the property in 1960, using the facility to assemble rockets and missiles, and most famously, to build space shuttles for the Apollo space program. In 1972, Apollo 16 embarked on NASA's fifth lunar landing. Four notable travelers boarded the flight: fungal species selected to determine what effect, if any, space exposure had on cell changes. Afterward, the fungi returned to Downey for post-flight analysis.

In 1996, Boeing Company acquired the plant and shut down the facility in 1999. The city of Downey and Stuart Lichter's Industrial Realty Group -- known for developing brownfields -- bought the property. A film production studio was built and a few years later, Kaiser constructed its medical complex.

Shephard's ailments began shortly after transferring to the facility. She eventually lost her muscle strength and her doctor deemed her 100-percent disabled, stating that her "severe limitations in mobility and cognitive function" resulted from "workplace exposure to mold and toxic chemicals."

Steve Basile, 53, worked as a prop maker at Downey Studios in September 2004 for the DreamWorks' film *The Island*. It was unusually rainy that fall, Basile recalled, and the roof leaked and the stage was damp. Workers used a bathroom in the far back of the building, which Basile described as reminiscent of a 1920s abandoned subway station with ponds of standing water and mold on the walls. He developed a sore throat and sniffles. Before long, he was coughing and hacking, and his muscles

grew sore. But he couldn't take any time off.

"We would stay because there's no work and you have to pay your mortgage," he said.

Sometimes, Basile and his partner climbed up to the ceiling to hang hoists for elevators, where they'd find beams covered with a black powder-like substance that made them cough. Clouds of particles always filled the air. Basile remembers workers removing asbestos and other people in hazmat suits removing dirt. His skin itched and his eyes burned. Basile never wore gloves and developed spots on his hands. He said his skin used to peel like a lizard's. One day in December of 2004, Basile's back snapped. That was his last day working at Downey.

Several months later, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 44 warned union members that Downey was a toxic site. Lichter sued IATSE for harming his business and the union settled for \$775,000. IATSE reversed its warnings and told workers the property was safe.

Daniel Ferguson worked as an actor at Downey Studios in June 2009 for the filming of *Iron Man 2*. He developed headaches, low energy, a dry cough and a sore throat that hasn't gone away. A month after his scene wrapped, he noticed rashes on his arms, which spread to his chest and back. Ferguson, 35, now suffers elbow, knee and lower back pain, and his illness has affected his ability to book acting jobs.

"For the past three years, I've been on sets for 15 hours a day and that's never affected me," Ferguson said. "Now, I can't pass the eight-hour mark. I never was like that before I walked on that set. I could have stayed on set for 24 hours if I had to."

Linda Sorensen, 55, worked for Rockwell International (which had merged with North American Aviation, and later Boeing) at Downey for 20 years. "I started getting back pain back in 1997 or 1998 and found out I have cancer of the spinal chord," she said. "I also used to get strange dizzy spells when I worked there and never could figure out why."

If indeed the site has sickened some Downey workers, these people are perhaps most upset because they believe their health shouldn't have been compromised in the first place, arguing that government officials could have prevented the development of the site.

A Los Angeles Time article last year reported that environmental surveys documented extensive contamination at Downey, including high concentrations of trichloroethylene found in the soil and groundwater. Exposure to this industrial solvent can cause nerve and organ damage, respiratory problems and impaired immunity. According to the article, these surveys found high levels of hexavalent chromium, which is used to plate metal and rust-proof aircraft engine parts, in the soil. Exposure to this chemical can cause damage to the nose, throat and lungs, and skin rashes.

Despite these risks, the city of Downey and IRG decided to redevelop the site in tandem with remediation efforts, which they were allowed to do thanks to an early-transfer amendment to CERCLA that fast-tracks redevelopment and allows the

federal government to transfer property to a non-federal entity before completion of environmental clean-ups. Expediting title transfer paves the way for financing and loans for remediation and redevelopment, and generates new jobs and tax revenue. Gov. Gray Davis approved the transfer.

On September 7, 2000, the Department of Toxic Substances Control's office of military facilities faxed a letter to EPA Region 9 Administrator Philip Armstrong about the draft environmental assessment for the Downey NASA plant. It notes how a local water purveyor had detected low-level concentrations of organic solvents, including tetrachloroethene, which can affect the central nervous system, kidney, liver and reproductive system. Symptoms manifest themselves as dizziness, headaches and poor balance. The letter states: "It is also our understanding that no risk assessments for human and ecological health have yet been performed for this property."

The letter continues: "Additionally, it is DTSC's understanding that NASA has proposed that future land use restrictions be placed in the deed to prohibit use ... [that] may expose persons or the environment to residual contaminants." The department recommended that a land-use covenant be entered into that would bind future owners. The letter was sent during negotiations for early transfer (PDF) of the NASA site to the city of Downey.

But early transfer authority allows the deferral of a Superfund deed covenant that requires "all remedial action necessary to protect human health and the environment" be completed prior to property transfer.

As for Armstrong, in May 2008, he retired from the EPA to join the Peace Corps and retreat to the West African nation of Mauritania.

Workers Fight Back

Downey workers have rallied together to fight for what they call much-deserved justice. In November 2009, a Los Angeles judge dismissed a libel lawsuit filed by IRG's Lichter against two ex-Downey workers and two operators of the Kaiserpapers Web site, which documents health concerns of former employees. Lichter did not return requests for comment. But he told the *L.A. Times* reporter last year that his company did an "amazing amount to transform this property, and everything we've done has been totally responsible."

Recently, Lawrence Rose, a former Cal/OSHA senior public health officer for 28 years, reviewed illness complaints of some Downey employees. He said these employees have an unusually high incidence of work-associated illnesses.

"In view of the long history of previous industrial activity, a thorough workplace investigation should be carried out in relation to the employee-illness complaints," Rose said. "The sampling for all toxic chemicals previously used there ... should be carried out in a systematic formal epidemiology study. This has not been done."

Back in Downey, after Gail Shephard retired in 2007, her daughter Kristi visited her ailing mother weekly. On March 22, 2009, Kristi, then only 36, called her mother complaining of a terrible earache. She died a few minutes later of a stroke. Shephard

said one autopsy found high levels of two toxins in Kristi's brain stem. Shephard worries she may somehow be to blame; that she brought home toxic mold and fungi from her workplace.

As for Steve Basile, after undergoing physical therapy for his back injury, he returned to work as a prop maker until October 2009. He had lost almost 50 pounds -- unintentionally -- and could no longer work. Nowadays, he undergoes chemotherapy for cancerous blood proteins, and he suffers nose bleeds, shortness of breath, headaches and occasionally develops bumps in his throat.

"It sucks," Basile said. "I got no energy. Probably two days out of the week, I get out [of the house]. I'm sick pretty much all the time. I try to do things so I don't end up on the couch. If I go to the couch, I'll stay there for three days."

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determine if the agency and the developers can achieve a mutually acceptable remediation solution that will allow work to proceed.

If the developers and staff are able to agree upon a mutually acceptable remediation plan, then an additional six-month extension of the negotiating period will be considered by the agency, staff said.

This would allow for the submission of a refined proposal and allow developers to hold a second community workshop.

It would also allow staff and the developers to complete environmental analysis of the project and final negotiations for consideration by the agency board.

Margaret Thornberry, president of the Fremont Cultural Arts Council, said it would be more beneficial for the city to grant Blake Hunt Ventures the extension rather than start over and find a new developer for the site. Her reasoning was to have public art places put in place sooner rather than later.

"I've spoken with Blake Hunt about having art in public places in the development," Thornberry said. "And I'd like to know more (about the current situation and plans to move forward). We certainly don't want to start over."

Centerville resident Kathy Kimberlin said she was representing four groups of people at the meeting who were both opposed and in favor of the project.

Kimberlin said the Glenmoor Gardens Homeowners Association opposed the project because it feared the site would be plagued with transient renters. The association said it wanted to see long-term investments from tenants in the project.

In addition, Kimberlin said the Centerville Business and Community Association also opposed the project, as the group wanted less housing and more retail.

The project initially consisted of an all-retail development, and the CBCA doesn't want housing to be developed on the site, even though Blake Hunt Ventures claims an all-retail development wouldn't be successful.

Conversely, Kimberlin said the Glenmoor Community Group wants housing on the site, as Silicon Valley employees could walk to the nearby AmTrak station and commute to work.

Finally, Kimberlin said residents of northern Centerville would like some kind of place for their kids to go after school to get a snack. Either way, she said they don't want to keep looking at a vacant dirt lot.

"I realize as I'm saying this we may not have any redevelopment funds to do anything with this site," she said. "The funny thing is all these groups want a Whole Foods there. I know that's not going to happen but I hope as you look at this tonight you decide what is best for the long-term for the Centerville community."

Brad Blake, chief executive officer of Blake Hunt Ventures, said progress on developing the site has been on hold for the last 10 months. He said costs to mitigate the soil vapors will be as much as \$700,000.

"We are prepared to pay for a substantial portion (of the work) or significant sharing with the city," Blake said. "We're not looking for the city to bear 100 percent of that cost."

He added nothing concrete has been proposed to

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the council or community, so another six-month extension could help his firm and CenterStreet Housing develop more defined plans. He said so far the plans have just been framework.

He did suggest a supermarket may finally come to the development as had been planned years ago when Centerville residents and business owners called for a Whole Foods on the site.

Over the years, supermarket chains have expressed some interest in the site but have never committed.

Blake said the Fresh and Easy supermarket chain could possibly come to the Centerville Unified property.

He said the England-based supermarkets are typically 14,000 to 15,000 square feet in size. The chain will open as many as eight stores in the Bay Area two of which are targeted for Fremont.

Blake said his firm has met with Fresh and Easy representatives several times, and the prospective tenant toured the property about two weeks ago.

He said the chain has expressed interest in coming to the Centerville property and were awaiting the outcome of Tuesday's meeting.

However, Blake said it would be at least another three years before anything would be completed on the site, and if redevelopment money is taken away by the state, it could be another seven or eight years to completion while the city restarts things.

"We believe we've worked in good faith for the past year to try to keep the project moving forward given these constraints, and we think it's the fair and right thing to do under these circumstances," he said.

The council also weighed in.

Councilman Bill Harrison said while the site has been challenging for various developers over the years, he has seen nothing but good faith from Blake Hunt Ventures.

Harrison said the developer has listened to the community, council and city staff through the entire process and has adapted to their concerns.

"I know over the last couple of weeks redevelopment has put a dark shadow over things, but I for one think we should move forward," he said. "The project has some momentum going and I think we should keep that momentum going."

But Dutra disagreed, suggesting the development team won't be able to fill the commercial space proposed in the project.

He noted his family's Mission Olive Plaza along Mission Boulevard in the Mission San Jose District a 20,000-square-foot commercial development completed in 2009 still hasn't been filled with tenants.

Dutra was concerned there's no specific plan for the site after several years, yet the city has already invested \$12.5 million into the project and plans to invest \$13.5 million more. He suggested the city focus more on the site's infrastructure, such as a parking district and building a new street between Dale Hardware and the site, rather than focus on a project that has no detailed plan.

Dutra said the city did the same thing with Auto Mall Parkway originally intended to be office space that turned into an automobile dealership boom that has boosted the city's economy.

"Those are the types of infrastructure things we have control over, that we can do now, and get done," he said. "And when the market comes back whether it's

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Brad Blake or someone else who wants to do something there I will absolutely guarantee you we will invest less money and I believe we will have a more stimulative project for the area."

Mayor Bob Wasserman said at one point many years ago, he would have voted to just drop the project and sell the land to outside buyers. But he said it was too late to do that and the city should continue trying to build something in Centerville.

"I don't have a huge amount of confidence this will come to fruition," Wasserman said. "But at least we have a developer who's worked hard to make something happen. We have staff that is working hard to make something happen, and maybe this would be the time, the timing of the economic recovery is going to work hand in hand with this project."

City Manager Fred Diaz said staff would return to the council with a status update on the remediation progress in three months.

Wasserman then said he wanted a more detailed report at that time since it has taken so long to get anything going.

"If we're not making progress I'd like a detailed account as to why we're not making any progress," he said. "And what cleanup has gone on at this point. I thought this had been going on for a long time. So I'd like to know more about that and why we're not getting any results."

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Houses giving off toxic fumes

One home's PCE level 485 times higher than safe

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Dangerous vapors in houses near two former Modesto dry cleaners triggered notices from state overseers to local public health officials.

Some occupants say technicians indicated that levels of PCE detected in their homes were no big deal. These people appeared surprised that the state's formal letter to Stanislaus County leaders suggests otherwise, and said they received no formal notice.

"There is reason to believe that the illegal discharges are likely to cause substantial injury to the public health," reads the letter from Michael Vivas, project manager with the state's Department of Toxic Substances Control to county officials, dated Dec. 22.

Although 14 current or former Modesto dry cleaners have polluted groundwater, high concentrations in soil samples at two prompted state officials to request "emergency" action by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Airborne perchloroethylene, or PCE, showed up in levels exceeding the state's limit in all 13 houses tested in May.

Scientists were concerned that other, untested homes near the two shops might have toxic vapors as well, according to documents.

The dry cleaning agent percolates into groundwater and can migrate through soil, giving off vapors that seep into nearby structures, scientists say.

Nine homes produced disconcerting readings near the former Sparkleen Cleaners, also operated as Service Cleaners, where La Loma and Covenia avenues meet Yosemite Boulevard. Samples in four houses near the former Elwoods Dry Cleaners and Sunshine Cleaners at McHenry and Morris avenues also tested high, Vivas wrote.

Levels in several homes are well into the state's "potential cancer risk" benchmark for PCE, which can cause liver damage and has given cancer to laboratory animals. One home produced a reading 485 times higher than the state "human health screening level," according to a report from the state's Human and Ecological Risk Office.

Cancer risk calculated

Also detected in seven of the 13 houses was 1,2-dichloroethane, which can attack the liver and kidneys. A reading in one home was 31 times higher than the state limit, a report says.

In a written response to Bee questions, Vivas said the state uses test results in a formula to calculate cancer risk. Constant exposure over decades could cause cancer in 49 of 100,000 people at the highest level recorded near the Yosemite site, and in four of 100,000 people near the Elwoods site, he said.

The calculations provide "a statistical tool to make decisions on what actions are necessary to protect the public health," Vivas said.

Dr. John Walker, the county's public health officer, said he and other county officials were briefed on testing procedures and periodically updated on the city's collaboration with state investigations.

"I think there is not cause for general concern," Walker said. "There is clearly a concern for those few residents in those locations."

Don Wood, who has lived near the former Elwoods for 35 years, said of a technician: "The guy read a gauge and said, 'To be alarmed, you need to be way over here (and it's not).' They told us it was a tiny, tiny amount."

Robin Mills, a neighbor for 12 years, said a technician suggested high readings in her basement might be blamed on fumes from paint cans. "When you live in an old house with old pipes, you have a lot of things to deal with," she said.

Stephen McNamara said he wasn't aware tests were conducted in an older home that houses four separate units, including his. "Lovely," he said when informed of results, adding, "I smoke anyway."

Vivas said federal officials "notified the residents about test results and recommendations."

The May tests prompted the EPA to install an underground vapor vacuum near the Yosemite site, and the city put similar equipment near the former Elwoods site in June, a document says.

Ernesto Gomez, who rents the small Yosemite homes to people, said he refused additional work because it would require "big pipes and big holes" in his units.

"They told me it was not really necessary," Gomez said. "They said (levels) were very minimal."

Unsure if vapors spread

But scientists could not access all homes that they wanted to test. And they aren't sure whether groundwater might carry dangerous vapors to a nearby apartment complex with dozens of units, a document says.

Federal officials plan to test six more homes near the Yosemite site, Vivas said.

Also, scientists have "uncertainty" about soil samples suggesting vapors around Acme Cleaners on H Street in west Modesto as well as another whose location was not identified. State toxicologists recommended further tests "to determine the impact on public health from vapor intrusion in these areas," the report says.

The state "is negotiating with the city of Modesto to address these sites," Vivas said.

Years ago, the city sued chemical producers and collected at least \$40 million in settlements, but cleanup costs may exceed \$100 million, according to one estimate.

City officials in 2002 signed an agreement to cooperate with the state and pay for environmental


investigations. Results will help formulate "a cleanup strategy for each individual site sometime in the near future," says a public notice produced in March.

On the Net: www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/profile_report.asp?global_id=50720008

Bee staff writer Garth Stapley can be reached at gstapley@modbee.com or 578-2390. • Illustration shows how PCE, a common dry cleaning agent, contaminates air in homes.

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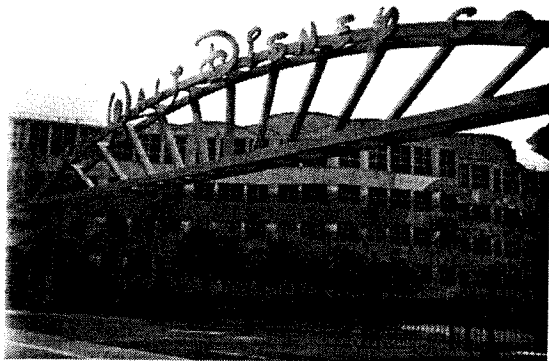
 The Wrap News

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By: Steven Mikulan

Disney's Chromium 6 Pollution Problem



An environmental lawsuit against Walt Disney's 50-acre Burbank film and TV production facility that has been quietly winding through federal court may soon be getting more attention -- and not just for its "Erin Brockovich" connections.

At the heart of the controversy is the alleged half-century of dumping by Disney of polluted air-conditioning water into storm drains surrounding its studio complex at 500 Buena Vista St. -- affecting nearby homes, the Burbank Equestrian Center, Johnny Carson

and Polliwog parks, and parts of Griffith Park.

The August 2009 federal lawsuit, filed by Environmental World Watch and several individuals who live near the Disney studios, alleges the discharge contained excessive levels of the carcinogens Trichloroethylene (TCE) and Tetrachloroethylene (PCE), as well as hexavalent chromium, more familiarly known to viewers of "Erin Brockovich" as Chromium 6.

"The allegations are completely baseless," Jonathan Friedland, a Disney spokesman, told The Wrap. Friedland denied that the company ever used Chromium 6.

A year after Disney opened its studio complex in 1939, the state-of-the-art facility boasted the then-uncommon luxury of air-conditioning. Supporters of the lawsuit who requested anonymity claim that while the air-conditioning system's cooling water -- which was flushed through storm drains and into the L.A. River -- wasn't toxic, various chemicals that were added to prevent scaling and rusting of its delivery-pipe system were. By the early 1990s the carcinogens were no longer being added to the water, and the coolant was no longer being flushed into the street.

However, the suit's plaintiffs claim, residual amounts of the pollutants continue to be discharged through old contaminated pipes, even though Disney has no permits for such discharging, a violation of the Clean Water and Resource Conservation and Recovery acts.

According to a source familiar with the case who requested anonymity, the presence of TCE, PCE and Chromium 6 groundwater plumes only became known as a result of the construction of the nearby 134 Freeway, which was finished in 1971. As a result of this discovery, Disney laid a 16-inch pipe into which it now pumps the spent coolant underneath the studio lot into a catch basin. Lawyers for the plaintiffs are seeking to learn if it continues to end up in the L.A. River.

The lawsuit could prove to be a major annoyance for Disney. A source familiar with the investigation told The Wrap that prior to 1991 Disney could have claimed ignorance and gotten off with a relatively small cleanup fee -- but that was before the company learned of the problems, thanks to data from monitoring wells it set up on its Buena Vista site in the early 1990s.

The lawsuit asks not only that Disney cease the discharge, but that it pay civil penalties on a per-violation/per-day basis -- a potential headache, although even if it loses in court or settles before trial, it's not certain how much Disney would actually wind up being on the hook for.

Documents show that the plaintiffs are not seeking a jury trial, but a bench decision in Los Angeles from U.S. District Court Judge Dean Pregerson. John Parker, a Sacramento lawyer for the plaintiffs, says that while the trial is not expected to start before September, 2011, the phase of seeking discovery evidence is about to begin.

Last October the Disney Company asked Pregerson to dismiss the suit, but was unsuccessful. The suit is being spearheaded by the Sacramento law firm Kershaw Cutter & Ratinoff, and has been joined by L.A. firm Girardi & Keese, which figured in the Erin Brockovich case against utility PG&E.

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Precision site cleanup moving forward, officials complain about lack of information

BY ERIN L. NISSLEY (STAFF WRITER)
Published: January 10, 2010

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GLENBURN TWP. - As federal officials tout big decreases in contamination at a former industrial site, officials and residents are upset about the continued lack of information available about the cleanup.

"There's a lot of frustration," Glenburn solicitor Malcolm MacGregor said. "All we want is more information."

Just under a year ago, several areas in and near the former Precision National Plating Services site were injected with calcium polysulfide to decrease the levels of hexavalent chromium that has leached into the soil, groundwater and Ackerly Creek.

Federal officials have said the levels of contaminants decreased significantly after the injections. Now, they are awaiting the completion of two reports that will help plot the next steps in the cleanup.

Residents and supervisors say they are not being provided with updated information about contamination levels and the

cleanup's progress. The lack of information fuels their concern about possible contamination still lurking underground and whether a public water source is necessary for those living near the former plant.

Cleanup progressing

The contamination at the 45-acre site could have begun as early as the 1950s, when chromium was used to plate locomotive crank shafts.

Precision bought the plant in 1970 and began dumping the chromium waste into an unlined lagoon on the site, according to EPA site coordinator Raj Sharma.

In 1994, water from private drinking wells on Arch Avenue tested positive for chromium contamination. Four years later, the Environmental Protection Agency issued an administrative order that held Precision responsible for cleaning up the site.

Precision closed the plant in 1999 and the building was demolished in 2000.

Injections of calcium polysulfide completed in early 2009 have been successful at decreasing the contamination levels in the soil and groundwater at and near the site, Mr. Sharma said.

In 2006, contamination in the soil was measured at 600 parts per million. But after the injections, those levels came down to 15 parts per million, which is 45 parts per million less than the federal maximum allowed.

Levels of contamination in parts of Ackerly Creek are still much higher than federal limits, though. One portion of the creek tested at 290 parts per billion in September 2006. Nine months after the injections, though, the same site found contaminant levels of 28.5 parts per billion, which exceeds the federal maximum of 11 parts per billion, Mr. Sharma said.

Glenburn Twp. officials and residents have criticized the EPA for not releasing enough information and for not keeping their Web site updated with current test results.

Mr. Sharma said the EPA is releasing information to residents and supervisors, most recently at a meeting last month open only to residents who lived near the former Precision site and township officials.

Glenburn resident and newly elected township supervisor David Jennings, a vocal critic of the ongoing cleanup efforts, said EPA officials talked about information at that meeting that even they could not find on the Web site when asked about it.

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"This has been an issue for years," Mr. Jennings said. "They say it's on the Web site and it's not. Or it is for a few days and then it's taken down."

Reports coming soon

There is more progress on the horizon, which Mr. Sharma said will be announced to residents and elected officials as it is available.

By February, Precision will submit a report to EPA officials outlining the next step in the cleanup process, including what they plan to do to continue decreasing contamination levels in Ackerly Creek. EPA officials will review the report before deciding to approve it, Mr. Sharma said, and may be made available for public viewing as early as March.

The EPA is also working on a report outlining options for longterm solutions to the groundwater contamination, Mr. Sharma said.

Precision has been resistant to the idea of providing a public water source to residents who live near the site, and Mr. Sharma said he is not yet sure that doing so would be necessary.

After that document is complete, Mr. Sharma said the EPA will hold a public meeting held to answer questions and address concerns, he added.

That report may answer lingering questions about whether Precision should or will provide an alternate water source for people who live close to the contamination.

Township officials said the EPA has been vague about whether it is safe to develop any property near the former Precision site, advising them to restrict development but not giving any direction as to how, where or why.

Because the EPA has provided no reasons why development should be restricted, township supervisor Bill Wicks said he and other officials have no clear path to follow when deciding whether to approve any development proposals in the areas near the contaminated site.

"(The EPA) say they think it's a bad idea but they can't really say why," Mr. Wicks said. "So we're going to landowners and basically forced to say they can't develop their property. It's not something I take lightly."

Because of all the questions about the continued safety of the drinking water, township officials said they want EPA to force Precision to provide a public water source as soon as possible.

"I'd like to see a water line within the next six months," Mr. Jennings said. "The EPA (has) the legal power to force Precision to provide one."

Contact the writer: enissley@timeshamrock.com

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Scranton woman dies in wreck

PLAINS TWP. - A Scranton woman was killed Sunday morning in a crash on Interstate 81, according to state police at Wyoming. Kelly Erin Ruddy, 21, lost control of her vehicle while traveling north on the interstate about 3 a.m. near the Bear Creek exit, p

Police: King's student urinated on Nativity scene
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Police: King's student urinated on Nativity scene

Man urinated on Nativity, cops say **WILKES-BARRE** - A King's College student allegedly urinated on a public Nativity scene early Sunday and could face repercussions from the law and his school. Nathan Strawn, 22, was arrested after being seen fully expos

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Driller says stop-work order will have no impact on operations

Days after Greenfield Twp. ordered a natural gas driller to halt operations on a well site it says is not zoned for the activity, the company, Exco Resources Inc., said it is working with the township to resolve the concerns but the order will have no im

I2M names new plant manager
Odd liability for council
Chris Pasqualichio and Meghan Petersen
Expanded use of LED traffic signals raises safety questions

Boulder, Xcel testing downtown groundwater for toxic chemicals

State health officials: Source likely 1900s gas-plant leftovers

By Heath Urie Camera Staff Writer
Boulder Daily Camera

Posted:09/27/2010 07:43:06 PM MDT

Two chemicals that can lead to major health problems have been detected in the groundwater near city-owned property in downtown Boulder, prompting a monthlong study on how widespread the problem is.

Officials say they don't think the benzene and naphthalene -- common industrial agents -- are threatening the city's drinking water, but they are investigating how and when the chemicals seeped into the groundwater at 1717 15th St.

They are looking into whether the site's history as a coal gasification plant in the early 1900s, or its more recent use as a dry cleaner business, are possible causes of the contamination. Most experts are already pointing to the old gas plant as the likely culprit, which could mean the chemicals have existed underground for decades.

Regardless of the source of the potentially dangerous compounds, Xcel Energy and the city of Boulder have agreed to share the cost of a \$30,000 study into the surrounding groundwater as well as the costs of a possible cleanup effort.

While the city manager first publicly acknowledged the problem in a brief memo sent Friday to the City Council, Boulder spokesman Patrick von Keyserling said the city has known about the contamination since mid-2009.

"The city is doing the responsible thing at the moment by investigating the source of the contamination," von Keyserling said.

He said a consultant working for the landlord of the former site of Art Cleaners told officials that benzene and naphthalene had been detected in the groundwater near the building.

Dennie "Chip" Wise, a Realtor who owns the building and hired the consultant, said the chemicals were first discovered in the early 2000s.

"When the Art Cleaners left the building, we required them to do a site analysis, and that's how it came up," Wise said.

It was not immediately clear Monday why the city wasn't alerted sooner about the contamination.

Wise said he's been spending his own money to clean the property since at least the early 2000s and that the work is still ongoing. He said no one from the city has contacted him about the planned study, but he's glad that the city and Xcel are "getting their act together" and looking at the site now.

Benzene and naphthalene have been associated with the dry-cleaning process, but Wise said his consultant believes the spill didn't come from his former tenant.

Art Cleaners' owner Brian Hansen said his company -- which has since moved over one building and no longer has its cleaning operations at the site -- never used the types of cleaning agents that could produce the chemicals that were found.

Walter Avramenko leads the Hazardous Waste Corrective Action Unit of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, which is charged with overseeing the cleanup of hazardous-waste sites across the state. He said the source of the chemicals is more likely remnants of the industrial history of the downtown site.

From 1902 to 1952, the property surrounding 13th Street and Canyon Boulevard was owned by the Federal Gas Co., which operated a coal gasification plant that produced fuel for heaters and lanterns. The plant, which was owned by the

Boulder, Xcel testing downtown groundwater for toxic chemicals

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From 1902 to 1952, the property surrounding 13th Street and Canyon Boulevard was owned by the Federal Gas Co., which operated a coal gasification plant that produced fuel for heaters and lanterns. The plant, which was owned by the

Public Service Co. of Colorado, an affiliate of Xcel Energy, was torn down by the early 1960s.

Tom Henley, a spokesman for Xcel, said the company is researching the legal relationship between the former plant and Xcel. But regardless of the history, he said Xcel has committed to paying for half of whatever cleanup -- if any -- is required. Xcel will also pay for two-thirds of the \$30,000 testing over the next month.

The company is not, however, admitting liability for the possible contamination by taking on the effort, he said.

Avramenko said the coal-to-gas process resulted in a sludge that often contained benzene and naphthalene, and because the solution was more dense than water, "when it leaks from a containment vessel, it sinks" into the soil.

He said similar spills have been contained to the footprint of the facility that caused it, but it is possible that the chemicals have moved with underground water over time.

Benzene can cause bone marrow to stop producing red blood cells, leading to anemia. It can also damage the immune system or cause cancer.

Naphthalene, which is used in the production of mothballs and has other industrial uses, can lead to anemia, damage to the liver and can cause neurological damage in infants. It's also a suspected carcinogen.

To find out how much of the chemicals are in Boulder's groundwater, and how widespread the chemicals may be, the city plans to begin testing groundwater in the area this week. Denver-based Environmental Resources Management has been hired to perform the series of tests.

The area of the testing will include the parking lot of the city-owned Dushanbe Teahouse and the Municipal Plaza where the Farmers Market is held, according to city officials.

Joe Castro, Boulder's facilities and fleet manager, said the consultant would begin drilling small wells as early as Wednesday. Castro said the work is not likely to affect the Farmers' Market or area businesses.

The results of the tests will help determine whether remediation work is needed, the extent of that work and how much it would cost.

Mark Williams, a water-quality specialist for Boulder County Public Health, said cleanup of the chemicals could consist of pumping up the groundwater, treating it and returning it to the ground.

"It's probably fairly readily treatable," he said, but likely an expensive effort.

Williams said there probably isn't a threat to the city's drinking water supply, but he said it is possible that the chemicals could seep into the nearby Boulder Creek.

From a legal perspective, neither Xcel nor the city may be responsible for cleaning the area because gasification plants from the early 1900s are specifically exempt from the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act that was passed in 1976 and governs hazardous waste.

It's more likely that the property falls under a voluntary cleanup standard, according to state health officials.

Contact Camera staff writer Heath Urie at 303-473-1328, or urieh@dailycamera.com.

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Fact Sheet, December 2009

Skyway Subdivision Groundwater Plume Investigation Update

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is distributing this fact sheet to update the community about the investigation and cleanup efforts occurring for the Skyway Subdivision Groundwater Plume (Site) in southwest Chico, California. The groundwater at the Site is contaminated with chlorinated solvents, primarily trichloroethylene (TCE). Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) has also been detected at very low levels. DTSC is overseeing the investigation and cleanup of the contaminated groundwater at the Site. The cleanup is currently in the Remedial Investigation (RI) stage, which involves conducting site investigations to learn more about the contamination levels in the groundwater and the size of the plume. The highest level of TCE found at the Site was 32 parts per billion (ppb), while the highest level of PCE found was 11 ppb. The maximum contaminant level (MCL) set by the California Department of Public Health for both TCE and PCE is 5 ppb.

This Fact Sheet Provides Information About:

- Site History and Background
- The Remedial Investigation
- Next Steps in the Cleanup Process
- Where to Find More Information

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The community is encouraged to participate in DTSC's cleanup efforts for the Site. Remedial Investigation groundwater sampling results are available for the public, and have been placed in the information repositories listed on page 4 of this fact sheet. If you have questions about the Skyway Subdivision Groundwater Plume Remedial Investigation please contact: **Steven Ross, DTSC Project Manager**, at 916-255-3694, or email him at Sross@dtsc.ca.gov.

For questions about public involvement, please contact: **Marcus Simpson, DTSC Public Participation Specialist**, at 916-255-6683, toll free at 1-866-495-5651, or by email at Msimpson@dtsc.ca.gov.

Para informacion en contacto Espanol Jesus Cruz, Especialista de Participacion Pu
1-866-495-5651.

Site History and Background Information

Groundwater contamination at the Site was first discovered in November 2003 during residential water well sampling conducted by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board. Further investigations revealed that the source of contamination came from the former CE Building Products operation at 37 Speedway Avenue, which until 1976 was the site of an aluminum manufacturer that used a vapor metal degreaser to clean parts. The degreaser contained the solvent TCE.

In March, 2004 DTSC began a bottled water program providing clean water to the community to help protect the residents in the Skyway Subdivision from exposure to the contamination. After taking over as the lead agency for groundwater cleanup at the Site, DTSC then provided 63 homes with carbon treatment systems to filter out contamination from residential well water. Further sampling that was conducted on residential wells in the Skyway Subdivision indicated that the carbon treatment systems were successful in filtering out the contamination from the well water.

In 2007, DTSC identified ABB, the successor of CE Building Products, as a responsible party for the investigation and cleanup of groundwater contamination at the Site.

Skyway Subdivision Municipal Water Connections

During community interviews with the Skyway Subdivision residents conducted in the summer of 2007, the vast majority of community members expressed their desire to have treated municipal water delivered to their homes. During a DTSC public meeting held in January 2008, the community was informed that ABB planned to provide municipal water hookups for those homes impacted by the Skyway Subdivision Groundwater Plume at no cost to the residents. The plan was well received by

the public. Construction for the public water expansion began in August 2008 and was completed in January 2009. The map on page 3 shows the newly installed public water line locations.

The Remedial Investigation

The Remedial Investigation (RI) is being conducted in phases. DTSC conducted Phase I of the RI in late 2005 and continued in 2006 with the installation of 12 monitoring wells throughout the Skyway Subdivision. Phase I of the RI also included groundwater monitoring.

Phase II of the RI was conducted in 2008 and 2009 by ABB, and included installation of 31 new monitoring wells throughout the Skyway Subdivision. Wells were installed immediately downgradient from the former CE Building Products facility to characterize the source of TCE in groundwater. Wells were also installed offsite to determine how far the groundwater plume extends (vertically and horizontally), and to monitor potential migration of the contamination.

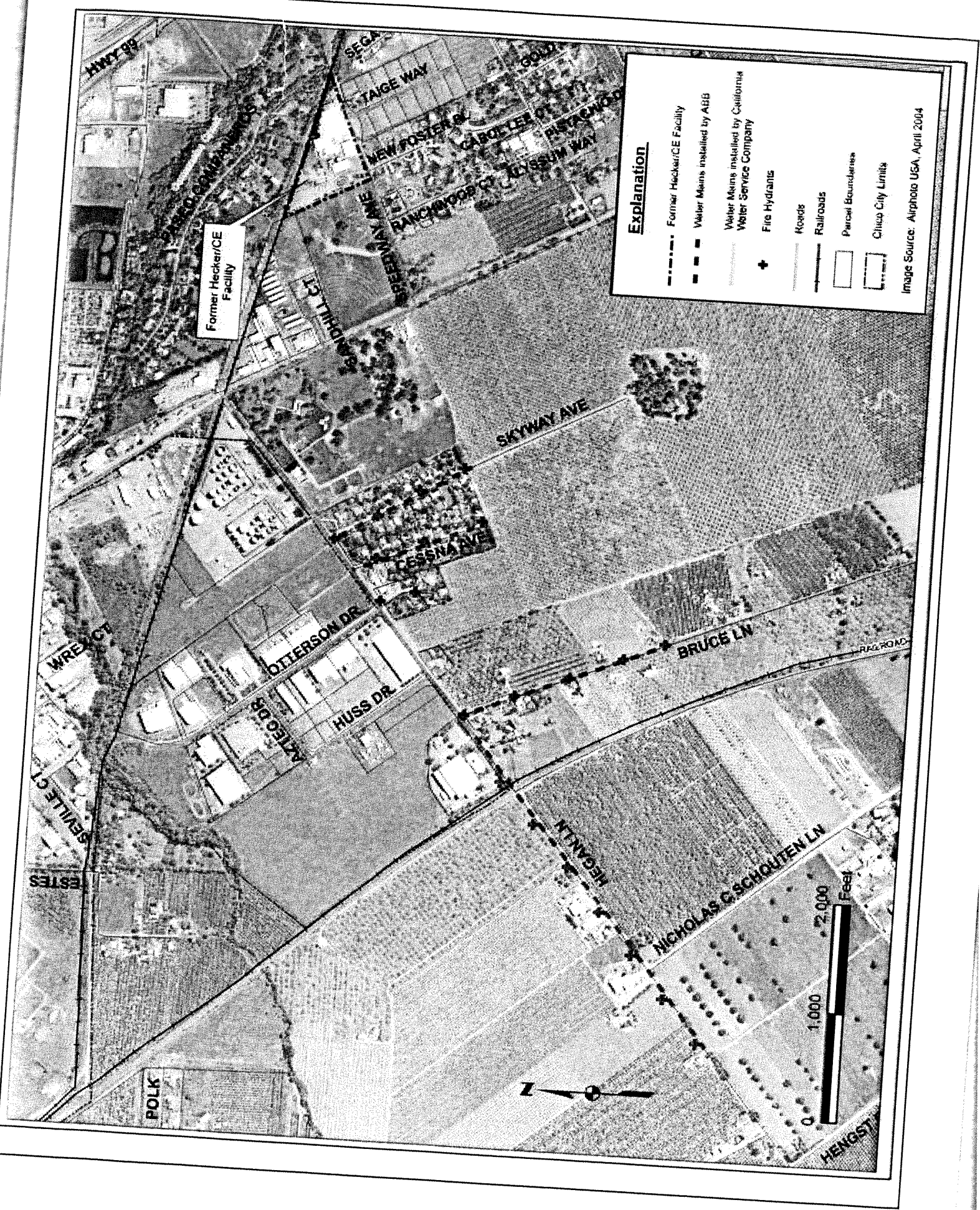
Groundwater monitoring will continue throughout the RI to evaluate contaminant levels and further define the boundaries of the plume. The table below presents a brief summary of contamination data gathered thus far.

Summary of Contamination Data

Contaminant	Maximum Concentration Detected	Maximum Contaminant Level
Trichloroethene (TCE)	32 ppb	5 ppb
Tetrachloroethene (PCE)	11 ppb	5 ppb

ppb = parts per billion

Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) = Drinking water standards established to prevent potential adverse human health effects.



Former Hecker/CE Facility

Explanation

- Former Hecker/CE Facility
- Water Mains installed by ABB
- Water Mains installed by California Water Service Company
- Fire Hydrants
- Roads
- Railroads
- Parcel Boundaries
- Clisco City Limits

Image Source: Airphoto USA, April 2004



Next Steps in the Cleanup Process

Results from Phase I and Phase II of the RI indicate the need for a third phase, which is in the preliminary planning stages at this time. Currently, the Phase III RI plan calls for the installation of additional monitoring wells in the vicinity of the Site to further map out the groundwater plume boundaries and to continue to monitor contamination levels.

Once the RI is complete, and the full extent of the Skyway Subdivision groundwater plume has been determined, a Feasibility Study will be conducted. The purpose of the Feasibility Study is to review a variety of cleanup alternatives for the plume, and then determine which alternative is the most appropriate for the Site.

Once the Feasibility Study is complete, a draft Remedial Action Plan (RAP) will be developed. The draft RAP is the draft cleanup plan for the plume, and it will be summarized in a future fact sheet as well as a public meeting for members of the community. The draft RAP will also include a public comment period to allow members of the public to provide their comments or questions about the cleanup plan, which DTSC will consider and respond to before making a final decision to implement the cleanup plan.

Information Repositories

Project documents, such as Remedial Investigation sampling reports and fact sheets are available for public review at the following information repositories:

Butte County Library, Chico Branch
1108 Sherman Avenue
Chico, California 95925
530-891-2762

DTSC, File Room
8800 Cal Center Drive
Sacramento, California 95826
File Room: 916-255-3758 (Please call for appointment)

Online at: www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public

For More Information

If you have questions or concerns about the Skyway Subdivision Groundwater Plume, please contact the DTSC project staff.

For general project questions please contact:

Steven Ross
DTSC Project Manager
(916) 255-3694
Email at: Sross@dtsc.ca.gov

For questions related to public participation please contact:

Marcus Simpson
DTSC Public Participation Specialist
(916) 255-6683
toll free: 1-866-495-5651
Email at: Msimpson@dtsc.ca.gov

For media questions please contact:

Carol Northrup
DTSC Public Information Officer
(510) 407-4817
Email at: Cnorthru@dtsc.ca.gov

Notice to the Hearing Impaired

TDD users can obtain additional information by using the California State Relay Service at 1-888-877-5378. Ask them to contact Steven Ross at 916-255-3694, or Marcus Simpson at (916) 255-6683, toll free at 1-866-495-5651.

Breaking News: Collision causes power outage on Highway 180; schools close

Home / News / Local

Lot sales ready to resume

- Story
- Discussion

Lot sales ready to resume



JOE FERGUSON Sun Staff Reporter azdailysun.com | Posted: Sunday, January 9, 2011 5:10 am | (1) Comments

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Jake Bacon The Wildflower Bread Company is located in the northern section of the Aspen Place development. The shopping complex, which also includes Pita Jungle, will soon have new owners. (Jake Bacon/Arizona Daily Sun)

After a fourth round of tests, Flagstaff officials now believe there are no significant levels of benzene and tetrachloroethylene in the soil of a midtown housing development.

City Manager Kevin Burke said the city will soon resume plans to sell at auction the 20-acre property of which it had taken ownership last year. Recently released soil vapor reports related to the southern half of the Aspen Place at The Sawmill found only minor contamination on the site -- nowhere near the levels that forced the city to suspend plans to sell the property several months ago.

The resumption of the auction is good news for taxpayers -- until the property is sold, the city of Flagstaff is responsible for roughly \$8 million in bond payments.

But some local builders are skeptical that a key four-acre parcel zoned for apartments and priced at \$4 million -- accounting for half the bond payments -- will be sold.

MINIMIZE VAPOR INTRUSION

A 113-page report from environmental services company Ninyo & Moore found no evidence of benzene in any of the 10 new wells it dug on the 20 acres and only one well reported dangerous levels of tetrachloroethylene, also called "dry-cleaning fluid" for its use in washing clothes.

The consultant suggested "that future structures be designed in a manner that would minimize the potential for vapor intrusion into the buildings."

Examples include concrete slabs rather than building basements, installing vapor barriers on all foundations and slabs and sealing all utility lines coming through floors

The largest health concerns are not with tetrachloroethylene itself but with the breakdown of the chemical into vinyl chloride, a known human carcinogen.

Treating contaminated soil can be done either by removing the soil or allowing the tetrachloroethylene to naturally turn into vapor and harmlessly leave the soil.

The latest samples were taken on Nov. 23 and 24 of last year, and all results were shipped to two different labs to maintain data integrity.

"It barely hits the California threshold," Burke said on Thursday.

The city used ~~contamination standards set by the state of California, as Arizona doesn't have an established~~ standard for measuring soil vapors.

The latest results largely agree with the last two rounds of testing, which found only low levels of volatile organic compounds throughout the site, which had been the home to a former lumber mill for several decades.

The results from the first soil vapor test, performed by Western Technologies of Flagstaff, have never been replicated by subsequent tests. It was that test that caused the city to postpone the first scheduled auction.

CONFIDENT PARCELS WILL SELL

Burke is confident the parcels will sell in the coming months. He also does not plan to budget the hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to make the next bond payments in the coming fiscal year.

The city of Flagstaff became responsible for roughly \$8 million in bond payments tied to an underlying improvement district after a Valley-based developer defaulted on the project.

A previous city council approved the complicated agreement, allowing the developer to get \$19.5 million in city-backed bonds to pay for the construction of streets and other infrastructure. The developer was expected to pay the amount back over a 25-year period.

Burke said he is confident the city will sell enough parcels to raise the cash necessary to make those bond payments.

DOUBTS ON APARTMENTS

However, local developer Tom Brewster said he doesn't believe the four-acre parcel zoned for apartments pencils out if the city wants \$4 million for the property.

Brewster, with AzNorth Development, said he is interested in several other parcels in the project.

But Burke remains confident the apartment parcel will sell, saying several bidders are interested in buying the entire project, not just one or two parcels.

It was the original developer, Burke said, who arranged for that particular parcel to be worth roughly half the bond assessment while only taking up 20 percent of the total land.

He said the underlying infrastructure is built for a high-density apartment complex, consisting of several hundred units in a multistory high-rise.

INITIAL REMEDIATION CLEARED

The city has also recently released several reports it had in its possession from the Aspen Group detailing several soil surveys and remediation done before the project began to take shape in late 2007.

A report issued by Geotechnical and Environmental Consultants in 2004 outlined a number of environmental problems on the site tied to the operations at the former lumber mill.

Issues included six underground storage tanks, an asbestos-filled building and a report of improper hazardous materials disposal, including PCBs supposedly dumped into the ground as well as oiled-stained concrete.

The underground storage tanks were removed in the mid-1990s, according to reports from the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.

A subsequent report filed by GEC suggested all previously identified environmental issues appear to have been resolved with the possible exception of some areas of surface soil staining.

Another report, filed in late November 2007 by Kary Environmental Services, reached the same conclusion. It stated soil remediation efforts had addressed concerns about any possible petroleum contaminants related to the underground storage tanks.

"It is KES' professional opinion that no further remediation would be required," the report stated. "This opinion is based on the fact that both areas were excavated and soil removed until all clearance samples with any detectable levels were below the regulatory levels."

Joe Ferguson can be reached at 556-2253 or jferguson@azdailysun.com.

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Posted in Local on *Sunday, January 9, 2011 5:10 am* Updated: 11:12 pm. | Tags: Topstory

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Other Stories

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- Up Close: The shipping muse



Contaminants at Phoenix site exceed standards

By Drew C. Wilson
2010-12-07 16:36:24

A preliminary report on groundwater and vapors at the old Phoenix recycling site found contaminants that exceed state standards, according to the N.C. Division of Waste Management.

However, those chemicals pose no immediate health risks to nearby residents and students at Tucker Creek Middle School, said Keith Snavelly, a DWM hydrogeologist.

Snavelly said results from the first initial tests of the site located just outside Havelock city limits show the need for more testing from new wells at the site.

According to the report sent to the *Havelock News*, no PCBs were detected in soil samples tested during the removal of 1,800 pounds of electrical components, including capacitors. However, the soil samples under and near the capacitors did contain arsenic and benzo(a) pyrene, a polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH), above standards.

The state plans to go back to the site to determine how widespread these contaminants are, Snavelly said.

He said the source of the arsenic and benzo(a) pyrene is unclear but said it could be from the extensive wood chip piles and treated wood scattered about the site. Treated wood is, in many cases, treated with arsenic and other metals.

Groundwater samples taken from seven monitoring wells and six vapor monitoring wells show the presence of arsenic, manganese and chromium above state standards as well as the naphthalene in one well that was above state standards.

In vapor samples, methane and hydrogen sulfide were found. Hydrogen sulfide was also found to exceed state soil-gas screening levels in three of six wells.

"Methane and hydrogen sulfide come from the decay of organic material and from the decay of naturally occurring organic material that is found in swamps and marsh areas," Snavelly said. "We have to determine if the vapors are coming from the decay of buried waste or from naturally occurring organic matter and determine its extent and effect across the site and determine if this is just localized in one area."

One vapor well was found to contain vinyl chloride and tetrachloroethene that exceed residential vapor intrusion levels. Another vapor well was found to contain dichloroethene levels that exceed residential vapor intrusion levels.

The adjacent Tucker Creek Middle School and nearby residences are not within the 100 foot "radius of influence" of the sampling points, Snavelly said.

Snavelly said that there is also the possibility that some results from the vapor wells were false readings.

"It is very important to note that the vapor samples that were collected were from air inside wells and do not represent ambient air conditions across the site," Snavely said.

Methane, an odorless, colorless gas, can be explosive when the concentration is between 5 and 15 percent, Snavely said. One well at the site found methane at more than 30 percent.

Hydrogen sulfide, unlike methane, has human health risks, Snavely said. Those risks include irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, headaches, nausea, fatigue, shortness of breath and chest pain.

The state intrusion screening level for hydrogen sulfide is 4.2 micrograms per cubic meter. One of the vapor wells at the Phoenix site had hydrogen sulfide detected at a level of 972,000 micrograms per cubic meter.

At the request of Havelock assistant city manager David Harvell, a puddle of blue to black colored fluid on a concrete pad apparently leeching from a mound of debris at the site was tested and found to contain three volatile organic compounds, five semi-volatile compounds and 14 metals. Included in the findings were levels of antimony, arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, mercury, nickel, selenium, silver, thallium and zinc.

Snavely said there is no standard for surface water against which to compare the various levels found in the fluid.

"When we go back out there, we do have standards for some of these in soils, just not in liquids," Snavely said.

Mercury was not detected in groundwater samples but was detected in vapor samples at concentrations below the residential screening level of .62 micrograms per cubic meter. The highest concentration of mercury detected at the site was 0.01 micrograms per cubic meter, Snavely said.

The next phase of work could begin as early as February with the drilling of new wells and testing of new samples. Further vapor samples will be collected as well.

Arsenic and PAH in soil will be delineated. Installed borings and probes will be sampled for buried waste.

"If the soil has to be removed, we will remove it," Snavely said. "If contamination is found to be widespread, (state) will evaluate and make a plan."

He said if the next tests show contamination, the site would remain as a DWM voluntary cleanup site.

Snavely said drinking wells of nearby homes on Pine Grove Road tested Sept. 8 did not show the presence of any of the contaminants found at the Phoenix site.

The Phoenix Recycling Corporation operated the site from 1993 to 2000 when it was ordered closed by DWM. Since that time the owners of the site have essentially abandoned it and owe 10 years worth of back property taxes to Craven County.

About 150,000 cubic yards of unprocessed waste remain at the site.

Though the site is outside of Havelock's city limits, city officials have taken the lead in efforts to have it cleaned up, including an application to the Environmental Protection Agency for a

Brownfields grant to broaden site assessments.

Estimates on the cleanup costs have ranged upward of \$7 million.

Officials with Havelock, Craven County, and the state have pledged to work together to clean up the site, which is located adjacent to Tucker Creek Middle School and the residential developments of Tucker Creek and MacDonald Downs.

Havelock officials have suggested the site could be made into a park for recreation and other purposes if the property is remediated.

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No health study planned for chemically tainted Preston neighbourhood

Nov 2nd, 2010 | By **Debbie Duff Vitez** | Section: **Environment & Health**

This ran in the Record..... comments invited below

November 02, 2010

By Kevin Swayze, Record staff

CAMBRIDGE — Going door to door looking for illness caused by a chemical in Preston's groundwater wouldn't tell worried residents any more than they know today, a provincial public health expert says.

Ray Copes, from the Ontario Agency for Health Protection, said decades of research leave little doubt trichloroethylene increases the risk of illness. In a neighbourhood of 1,500 or 2,000 people, however, the risk is tiny from the once-common industrial and household chemical seeping from the ground and tainting the air of their homes.

"We would be looking for a single (cancer) outcome over 70 years," Copes said after researching the chemical's risk to the residents of the Bishop Street and Concession Road area stretching to the Grand River.

"It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

Effort would be better put into pushing ahead with ongoing cleanup of the industrial area to reduce the future risk, he told a meeting of 80 people Monday at the Cambridge Hotel. His report will be made public by the end of November, after including comments from public sessions Monday afternoon and evening.

Trichloroethylene was found in the water under the for now closed Northstar Aerospace plant in 2005, and later under a neighbouring property owned by GE Canada. Since then, 500 homes have been tested for the vapour seeping in, and the companies have started a \$20-million cleanup. Air-cleaning equipment has been installed in some homes.

"The plume itself is actually reducing in size because of the remedial actions," said Dr. Hsiu-Li Wang, Waterloo Region's associate medical officer of health.

Even so, the air quality in 200 more homes will be tested this winter, because the province lowered the permissible exposure standard in January from 2.3 micrograms per metre cube to 0.5 — a fivefold decrease.

That doesn't mean an increase in the risk of becoming ill, Copes said. It just means more homes have to be tested against the new standard based on the most recent research.

Copes' answers didn't satisfy Donna Stewart, who grew up on Concession Road and wonders if her rare thymus cancer was caused by trichloroethylene exposure in her parent's house. Sixty people have added their names on her unscientific tally of neighbours' illnesses at www.bishopstreetregistry.net.

"Who is getting sick with what? That's something I would be interested in," Stewart said.

"It's very distressing to have grown up in this neighbourhood, to be sick and bewildered and have a sense nobody is keeping score. Nobody cares?"

Her neighbour, Bert Rutledge, is worried, too, but doubts officials can give answers people want.

"The truth of the matter is, they don't know. We expect too much of science right now," he said after the meeting.

"I'm happy with Northstar: they've done everything they can to get the (trichloroethylene) levels down. I'm being treated well."

Some residents wanted a study of everyone's illnesses in the neighbourhood, but public health officials rejected the idea Monday.

Health officials said with so many people moving in and out of the area over the decades, and so many other potential health risks, it's difficult to tie any illness to trichloroethylene.

Only now is Queen's Park getting ready for a huge, 20-year study into why and how Ontarians become ill, said Dr. Liana Nolan, Waterloo Region's medical officer of health.

"It's hard to understand what's happening in the province, let alone in a neighbourhood with 1,500 people," Nolan said.

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State orders action to dissipate toxic chemical in Fairfax

By Richard Halstead
Marin Independent Journal

Posted: 10/03/2011 06:27:26 PM PDT

The state Department of Toxic Substances Control is requiring the former owners of the Fair-Anselm Plaza in Fairfax to take immediate steps to dissipate high concentrations of a toxic chemical beneath the shopping center.

Investigators found high levels of the chemical, perchloroethylene, or PCE, beneath the eastern side of the center, at 701 through 713 Center Blvd.

PCE is a colorless liquid used as an industrial solvent — particularly by dry-cleaners — and is classified as a probable cancer agent by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Picaroto Cleaners, a dry-cleaning business; Coin Washing Well, a laundromat; and the Fairfax Gym are among the businesses that share a building in the center's eastern section.

In July, state investigators drilled 13 wells and tested gases in the gravel layer immediately beneath the building's concrete floor.

"We were seeing concentrations of between 100 and 800 parts per million, and any of those are high enough to cause us to do something about it," said Daniel Murphy, a supervising engineer with the Department of Toxic Substances Control.

The state agency is requiring the center's former owners, Matt and Dan Friedman, to install a system that will pump the contaminated gas out of the gravel beneath the concrete and run it through a filter to remove the PCE.

"That's what we proposed doing two years ago," Dan Friedman said Monday. Friedman, however, referred

all questions to his attorney, Merton Howard, a lawyer with the San Francisco firm Hanson Bridgett. Howard could not be reached for comment.

"Even though we don't think there is an immediate threat to public health," Murphy said, "we really want to get this system in so we don't have to worry about that possibility anymore."

Murphy said before the Friedmans can proceed they must obtain a permit from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. He said that could take several weeks.

"Eventually," Murphy said, "I suppose we'll get



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to a solution for the PCE that is in the soil but devising what kind of a remedy that would be will take a while." He said more testing may be required.

Michael Altman, owner of Iron Springs Pub and Brewery, which is in the western section of the center at 765 Center Blvd., said he was unconcerned about the new test results.

"They found something and they have to dissipate it," Altman said. "It's just sort of standard operating procedure."

The state ordered the Friedmans to pay for additional investigation at the site after George Bianchini, who formerly operated Broadway Video at the center, said he had had his own testing done and found unsafe PCE fumes near his business at 711 and 705 Center Blvd.

Bianchini said he and his wife, Charlene Bianchini, have suffered a succession of adverse health effects from the PCE contamination. The Bianchinis have sued the Friedmans, seeking \$884,000 as compensation for rent paid as well as thousands of dollars in fines for health and safety violations, and an unspecified amount for general and special damages.

Bianchini said Monday he hasn't been waiting for the new test results to bolster his case.

"I haven't been much concerned about that. They found it in my blood," Bianchini said. "It's just a matter of having my day in court."

Fairfax Town Manager Michael Rock said county environmental health officials identified high levels of perchloroethylene at

the Fair-Anselm Plaza and commissioned a cleanup of the site that concluded in 2001 with "a clean bill of health."

The Bianchinis' suit states that that remediation effort resulted in the removal of nearly 92 tons of contaminated earth. The suit contends, however, that subsequent soil sampling showed the continued presence of PCE above safe levels in the soil under Picaroto Cleaners at 709 Center Blvd. The suit states that instead of continuing excavation, the Friedmans covered 14,000 pounds of remaining PCE-contaminated soil with a new cement slab and sealant.

Contact Richard Halstead via e-mail at rhalstead@marinij.com




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