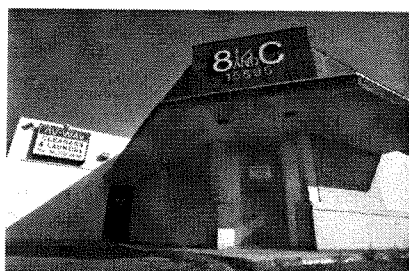




Former NuWay site poses health risk

Brooke Edwards

2010-04-13 16:54:43



VICTORVILLE • Very high concentrations of toxic chemicals have been found at the city-owned site of a former dry cleaner in Old Town, according to initial results from the Environmental Protection Agency. And studies are still underway to determine if the toxins pose a health risk for nearby businesses and homes, if they've reached the groundwater supply and what needs to be done to clean up the site.

"It is a good thing that the city is involved," spokeswoman Yvonne Hester said. "It's something that has to be dealt with."

NuWay Dry Cleaners operated on the corner of 8th and C streets from the late 1950s until 2001.

Victorville purchased the site from San Bernardino County in 2007, after the county seized it for unpaid property taxes. The city demolished the 6,200-square-foot building in 2008, as part of its plan to redevelop Old Town with a mix of commercial and residential buildings.

"When we purchased the property, knowing it was the former site of a cleaner, we anticipated that there would be some work that would have to be done on the property to make sure any kind of contaminants would be dealt with," Hester said. "If a private person had purchased it, they could have gotten it cheap ... and they could have sat on it and done no remediation."

Knowing the clean-up work could be pricey, Victorville applied for the EPA's Brownfields Assessment Grant, and work to evaluate the damage got underway.

To read the full story, see Wednesday's Daily Press. To subscribe to the Daily Press in print or online, call (760) 241-7755 or click [here](#).

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Valley to clean up after dry cleaners

Tuesday, Apr. 21, 2009

By Lewis Griswold / The Fresno Bee

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Cities around the Valley are wrestling with a legacy of environmental contamination: a chemical used for decades by dry cleaners.

Now suspected of causing cancer, the chemical has permeated underground water and soil. Cleanup is necessary, but expensive, and there's no easy way to pay for it.

In Visalia, federal and state environmental agencies, alerted by high levels of the chemical in drinking water wells, dug six test wells last month near existing and former dry-cleaning businesses. The Environmental Protection Agency and California's Department of Toxic Substances Control were hunting for a plume of perchlorethylene -- called PCE -- used as dry-cleaning fluid since 1934 that started turning up in Valley water wells in the 1970s.



MARK CROSSE / THE FRESNO BEE

Troy Stephens carries empty barrels to the drilling site at Acequia and Willis in Visalia. This is one of six test wells that federal and state agencies dug in Visalia to look for perchlorethylene, a chemical used in dry cleaning that has contaminated soil and underground water supplies.

Results are due this summer, but it's a foregone conclusion that any PCE found will be blamed on dry cleaners. A 1992 state study found that virtually all contaminated drinking water wells in the Valley had been fouled by dry cleaning fluid, including three in Visalia, two of which are now hooked to filters.

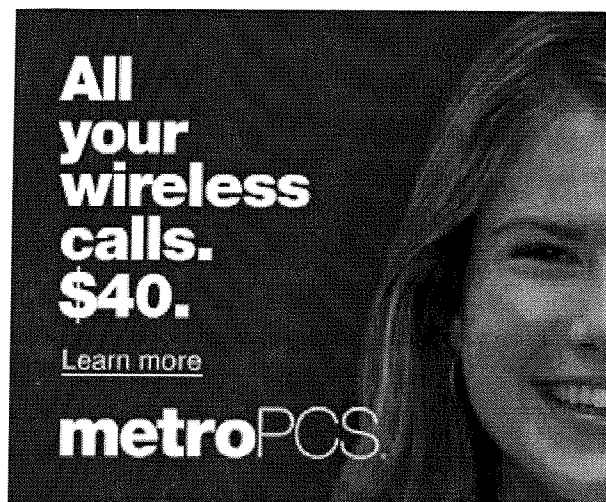
Visalia officials are watching with concern, fearing the city will get snared in a blame game and then be forced to launch expensive lawsuits against property owners, dry-cleaning businesses and others to collect money for cleanups -- also known as remediation.

"Cities are always worried about this," said Mike Olmos, Visalia's assistant city manager. "If they find contamination, you

get into remediation and someone has to take responsibility. We're watching it carefully to see what they come up with."

Visalia should be worried, said Roland Stevens, the assistant city attorney of Modesto, which in 1997 sued dry cleaners, dry-cleaning equipment manufacturers, property owners and chemical companies because of well-water contamination. Figuring out who will pay for cleanup is the subject of a long-standing debate involving local, state and federal officials, dry cleaners, property owners and insurance companies.

"We're concerned about state agencies trying to force us to clean up because they look for



whatever deep pockets they can find," Stevens said.

Lodi residents -- including those who might never have had an article of clothing dry cleaned in their lives -- are helping pay for cleanup in that city through an \$11-a-month charge on their local water bills.

The cost to clean up can be huge.

Modesto estimated it would cost \$100 million to clean up its 30 sites.

After a 10 year-battle, the city won a \$178 million judgment in 2007 against manufacturers and distributors of dry-

cleaning equipment and a chemical company; the judgment was later reduced to \$12.7 million, but the city has yet to collect because it's still tied up in court. The city collected \$23.8 million from two chemical companies that settled.

Modesto's PCE contamination was discovered in 1984, and the cleanup began in 2000. So much PCE is in the soil around one dry-cleaning establishment that it's a federal Superfund site.

Modesto sued because of what happened in Turlock, Stevens said. Turlock was the first Valley city pressured by the state to do a major cleanup.

Turlock, which found PCE in 1989 at dry cleaners and industrial sites in its downtown, did not sue anyone. Instead, Turlock and the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board agreed the city would clean it up, with help from the state. The city has spent about \$1 million so far but is just getting started; the regional board has reimbursed the city about \$736,000 for cleanup costs, and the city still expects to spend an additional \$459,000.

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Action plan due on north Chico plume

By LARRY MITCHELL - Staff Writer

Posted: 12/28/2009 12:00:00 AM PST

CHICO -- By late January or early February, the state expects to announce its plans for cleaning up a polluted site near the North Valley Plaza mall.

The "action plan" will be available online and at the Chico library, said Carol Northrup, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Toxic Substances Control.

Chemicals have contaminated the soil and groundwater in a 6.5-acre area near the intersection of East Avenue and Cohasset Road.

The pollution came from a business called the North Valley Plaza Cleaners, which operated at 801 East Ave. from 1964 to 1997.

While the chemicals have spread over a wide area, they haven't gone deep enough to pollute water used for drinking, Northrup said.

Four chemicals have been found at the site: trichloroethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PCE), dichloroethane (DCA) and dichloroethene (DCE).

The action plan will contain the department's proposals for cleaning up the polluted site.

A period will be given for the public to comment on this plan, she said, adding that comment periods are typically about a month long.

Toward the end of the comment period, a meeting will be held in Chico to allow people to comment on

the plan in person.

Once the comments have been reviewed and considered, a final proposal will be issued, and work will begin to clean up the pollution.

Northrup said the department has various ways of removing contaminants from soil and water. Sometimes water is pumped out of the ground and treated. Other times, contaminated water can be treated in the ground.

One innovative method involves putting soy into the ground. A type of bacteria likes to eat soy and also enjoys certain kinds of solvents, she said.

Her department has been trying to use cleaning methods that are energy-efficient, she added.

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Basement groundwater pumping raises concerns

Experts question safety of massive groundwater pumping for basements in Palo Alto

Day-in, day-out from April through October, residents of Old Palo Alto have noticed the incessant pumping of water -- estimated at up to 13 million gallons taken from one property alone.

In the last two years, eight property owners have built basements in or near the pricey neighborhood, according to Mike Nafziger, a Public Works Department senior engineer.

The catch is that the high water table in the area forces "dewatering" of millions of gallons of groundwater before a basement can be built. Yet because the aquifers flowing under Palo Alto are billions of gallons the impact of pumping is relatively small, according to one city official. At most it would cause a temporary depression in the water table, he said.

Noise annoyance aside, some residents are concerned about what's in the groundwater and whether pumping it out actually draws a toxic plume from the Stanford Research Park closer to their residential neighborhood.

The plume, which mainly stems from an underground tank that for years leaked trichloroethylene (TCE) as well as other chemicals, was first discovered in 1981 and was listed as a Superfund site in 1990. The most prevalent chemical, TCE, is a known carcinogen and solvent for cleaning metal equipment. It is already the subject of ongoing study and clean-up effort.

There are regulatory safeguards at various levels of government. But testing of pumped groundwater is optional and sporadic, and the multiple agencies involved create a potential for gaps.

City officials don't appear to be worried.

The pumping is legal and approved by the city's Public Works Department and Palo Alto's Regional Water Quality Control Plant in the baylands.

But sucking water out of shallow wells to "dewater" a site so a basement excavation can occur ranges from 30 to 50 gallons per minute, 24 hours a day for between three and six months, according to a 2008 city staff report.

The volume of water removed ranges from 3.9 million to nearly 13 million gallons per property. The eight permits over the past two years totaled just under 50 million gallons, according to city estimates equivalent to approximately 75 Olympic-size swimming pools.

The latest pumping involves Google co-founder Larry Page's large basement project in the 2100 block of Bryant Street.

In 2008, some residents questioned whether pumping from earlier projects in the area might be drawing the toxic-contaminated plume toward residential neighborhoods. The plume presently predominantly underlies non-residential areas in the vicinity of Page Mill Road and El Camino Real -- but it includes the Chesnut-Wilton-Ventura neighborhood of smaller homes as well as apartments along Sherman Avenue near the North County Courthouse, according to a Santa Clara Valley Water District map.

The Larry Page property is about 1,500 feet east of the contaminated plume, according to the map.

Five of the eight residences where the pumping is happening are aligned north and east of Page's property, lying between Oregon Expressway and Embarcadero Road.

So far, no toxics have been found in water pumped from the projects, according to Ken Torke, environmental control programs manager at the city's Regional Water Quality Control Plant.

But that's because no one has looked. The treatment plant has not require a single property to test the water, Torke said.

The homeowners are not required under city, state or federal law to have the pumped groundwater tested. But the boundaries of the contaminated plume have not been precisely measured and need further study, according to a review of the Superfund site this year by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, a state agency.

Stephen Hill, who heads the toxics-cleanup division at the water board, said there are two ways his agency interacts with cities: "We copy the city on all correspondence about HP 640 and other cleanup sites as a matter of courtesy." He said the agency also is available to provide expertise to help cities investigate vapor-intrusion concerns.

Yet some hydrologists express concern that large-scale pumping could accelerate the spread of the contaminated plume.

Yoram Rubin, a civil and environmental engineering professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who specializes in hydrology, said there could be reason for concern. The pumping and direction of flow of the aquifer "could have the combined and significant effect of accelerating the migration of contaminants further into the residential areas.

"It could be a significant risk and deserves careful study," he said.

But the volume of residential pumping pales in comparison to longstanding pumping done to clean up the contaminated water.

"Multiple pumps in the center of these (Superfund clean-up) sites are pulling in an equal or greater amount of water every day. A small project, a half a mile away, is unlikely to change anything," Torke said.

The regional water board's 2010 review of the HP Superfund site recommended additional monitoring of the plume in order to ensure containment. (See [www.paloaltoonline.com Weekly story, Oct. 8, 2010]).

"With such uncertainty, I would worry about the effects of this pumping," Rubin said, speaking as a hydrologist but not as a specialist in Palo Alto groundwater.

Others have argued against the continued basement pumping because knowledge of the exact nature and extent of the toxic plume has been shaky for some years.

"Many containment plumes are mapped, but others are poorly characterized. Such risks additionally weigh against construction dewatering," Palo Alto resident David Stonestrom wrote in an open letter to the Palo Alto City Council in 2008, when new regulations regarding basements were adopted.

Stonestrom, U.S. Geological Survey hydrologist, said he wrote out of concern as a resident and not in his professional capacity.

But city officials say there is little to be concerned about regarding these short-term pumping projects because of checks and balances relating to the regulatory agencies involved.

Three systems contain the TCE-bearing plume, according to Roger Papler, case manager for the Regional Water Board. The systems are (1) extraction wells on the HP property, (2) wells off the HP property and (3) a high-volume filtration system at the Oregon underpass, which can filter up to 600 gallons of contaminated water per minute.

The measures currently in place "effectively contain the plume," Papler said.

"It would be very difficult for those operations to draw the ... plume into the local groundwater. Even if they did, the chances of the water exceeding maximum contaminant levels for drinking water are pretty low."

But vapors are a concern.

It's uncertain whether vapor from the contaminated plume could diffuse into basements. New technologies to measure

such intrusion have not been used at the HP Superfund site, he said.

TCE intrusion was discovered in 2009 in the basement air of the Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati law firm near the eastern edge in the Research Park. Papler said a work plan is being developed to address the vapor intrusion and monitoring questions.

The city's Department of Public Works and the city's Regional Water Quality Control Plant evaluate construction plans that involve dewatering. They can -- but often don't -- require contractors to test water for contaminants before pumping it into storm drains, according to Phil Bobel, Public Works' acting assistant director for engineering.

"If it's in the vicinity of known contamination plumes, then we require them to do tests for the contaminating substances in question," Bobel said.

In addition, the regional water board and Hewlett-Packard jointly supervise the plume's clean-up and containment.

"Any time we have a groundwater-pumping project, we send it off to them, and whatever they comment on we incorporate into our environmental review process," city Planning Director Curtis Williams said.

The Palo Alto wastewater-treatment operation reserves the right to test water before contractors discharge it into city storm drains, according to Torke. But no testing was required this year, he said.

"They were not near enough to sites of known groundwater contamination," Torke said.

All basement applications must have a soil-type and groundwater report, which he said help determine the volume and duration of pumping.

"The volume of water potentially involved depends on the soil type," Richard Woodard, principal engineer at San Carlos-based Romig Engineering, said. Romig has done a number of the "geotechnical" reports in Palo Alto that relate to pumping.

"If it's clay, water will come but at a reasonable rate. If the soil is more permeable, the dewatering will continue throughout the project," he said. While no testing was required for Page's basement project, it is less than 1,500 feet from the plume edge, as estimated by the regional water board's 2010 report. Torke said previous nearby testing had shown no contamination.

Groundwater pumping is unlikely to pull the contamination beyond its existing known boundaries, Torke said.

"When you think of millions of gallons of water, it seems like an Olympic swimming pool, but the plume itself is probably on the order of billions of gallons of water," he said.

Furthermore, the city officials said that pumping, which moves groundwater, doesn't necessarily move contaminants at the same rate.

Chlorinated solvents such as TCE "are heavier than the groundwater that they've seeped into, so they tend to sit at the impermeable bottom of the shallow aquifer," Torke said.

"These plumes tend to move more slowly than the water above."

In 2008, Torke said he grabbed three water samples at a Waverley Street site near Page's property "out of curiosity, wondering if the plume had moved and nobody knew about it. There wasn't any contamination in it," he said.

The city has encountered contaminated groundwater near other plumes, as it did in 2008 under the then-planned Taube Koret Campus for Jewish Life on the former Ford Aerospace site in south Palo Alto. That discovery resulted in significant changes in design, including requiring all buildings to be raised a full story off the ground for air circulation.

When contaminated water is found, such as in the Taube Koret case, it can't be discharged into city storm drains. The removed water is instead routed to the sewage-treatment plant, according to Torke.

At the treatment plant, a three-step process lets chemicals settle, exposes the water to bacteria -- which "essentially chomp away at large organic compounds to make smaller ones" -- and filters it, Bobel said.

If water contamination exceeds sewage-treatment-plant limits, it needs to be brought to a hazardous-waste site in barrels or tank trucks, Bobel said.

Some city officials suggest that older construction styles might have greater consequences for groundwater flow than the new short-term projects.

The city used to allow permanent groundwater pumping out of basements prior to 2006, which an official said could have a greater overall impact on the movement of contaminated-plume water. While there is currently no "mandatory phase-out" of existing permanent drainage systems, the city considers such installations worrisome.

However, city officials said that public health concerns associated with standing water, not concerns about the potential movement of groundwater, motivated the city's decision to outlaw new permanent drainage constructions. The city now only allows groundwater pumping during construction and only during the dry season, between April 1 and Nov. 1, so as not to overload the city's storm-drain system.

Prior to 2006, the draining method was a combination of perforated drain pipe flowing into a sub-basement catch basin and being pumped to the surface via garden-hose-size pipe. The water is not tested.

Both permanent pumping systems, such as the catch basin, and one-time pumping during construction address a central problem of building in areas with high water tables: the pressure groundwater exerts on basements, causing poorly constructed basements to try to float upward.

"The new regulations mean that the waterproofing materials must be installed in such a way as to withstand the extra hydrostatic pressure," said Brig Ord, a local contractor who has installed basements before and after the change in regulation.

Ord estimates that the ban on permanent pumping systems has increased the cost of building a basement in a high-water zone by about \$20,000.

Older basements currently escape city oversight. When originally installed, the projects didn't require city approval, and so the city doesn't have a complete record.

"When we discover a permanent-pump system, we try to discourage the owner," Bobel said, adding that many still exist undetected.

"The short-term pumping associated with the construction regulation is less concerning than those long-term projects that do influence the water table," Bobel said.

==B Related stories:==

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Presence of TCE worries homebuyers

Couple backs out after disclosures mention toxics under E. Evelyn

by Daniel DeBolt
Mountain View Voice Staff

The level of toxics in the groundwater under a new Shea Homes development is low, by northeastern Mountain View standards. But at least one local couple has backed out of a purchase nonetheless, citing particular concern over TCE there.

The 150-unit row home development known as "Mondrian" at 505 E. Evelyn Ave. is currently under construction. Its three-bedroom homes are priced at around \$600,000, and appeared to be a good deal to the Zimmermans, a young newlywed couple.

"Well-priced three-bedroom homes in Mountain View are hard to find," Elaine Zimmerman wrote in an e-mail.

The Zimmermans put down a deposit and were given a week to look through a 150-page binder full of information, fill out forms and gather the necessary records. At the last minute, they found a page in the binder mentioning the toxin known as trichloroethylene, or TCE. After some Google searching, the couple found a Web site describing TCE as highly carcinogenic, and decided the low-priced home wasn't worth the worry.

With comparably sized new homes in the area going for \$900,000, "We decided that \$300,000 is the price of your health," Elaine Zimmerman joked.

Don Hofer, vice president of Shea Homes Northern California division, says the Mondrian homes are not at all dangerous. But he added that potential buyers unhappy with that or any aspect of the homes shouldn't buy them.

"We have full Department of Toxic Substances Control approval of the site for housing and it's very safe," Hofer said. "In regards to homebuyers that canceled, that's why we disclose these things. If they aren't comfortable with the situation they probably made the right decision for all of us."

The City Council approved a rezoning of the area, from general industrial to medium density residential, in April 2006. That decision gave Shea Homes the green light to design the complex, which later received city approval.

==B Real or imagined==

Numerous epidemiological and lab studies on the health effects of TCE are compiled in a 2006 report from the National Academy of Sciences National Research Council. Some studies indicate that TCE causes human fetus development problems and might cause congenital heart defects. Other studies say it may be linked with Parkinson's disease. Inhalation of TCE fumes also can have neurological effects, the report says, such as slowed reflexes. Various forms of cancer also were cited as possible side effects.

Though the groundwater concentrations are much lower than at other housing sites in the city, such as at Whisman Station, Elaine Zimmerman was still concerned.

"Is it worth freaking everybody out? I don't know," she said. She worries that others may not be as diligent as she was in reading all of the fine print. "I just think of all those other couples I saw" touring the homes.

Soil and groundwater contaminated with TCE are a common phenomenon in northeastern Mountain View. Just north of

the Mondrian project is Whisman Station, a 503-unit development built on the site of a former GTE operation which used TCE as a solvent. After construction, 40 homes were tested in 2004 for toxic TCE vapors, which can come up through the soil and into the air above. One home was found to have unacceptable levels of TCE in the air -- a problem which could have been caused by a tear in the special membrane developers installed in the foundation during construction.

The leak was mitigated by installing a ventilation system. Other Whisman Station homeowners did not allow the EPA in their homes.

==B Test results==

At Mondrian, the source of the TCE is likely a small building once located at the center of the site that was used to store "significant quantities" of hazardous materials for semiconductor wafer manufacturer Pacific Western, which occupied the site after 1979. The 1962 building's first tenants were Memorex and the Carburundum Company. Less toxic VOCs such as PCE and DCE were also found on the site, along with low levels of the pesticide DDT, evidence of the vineyard and orchard uses there before 1962.

Analysis of groundwater samples at the northwestern edge of the site showed no connection with the TCE plume at Whisman Station.

The best way to determine the risk of vapor intrusion is by measuring groundwater concentrations. Maximum concentrations at Mondrian are 21 parts per billion, versus over 100 parts per billion at Whisman Station, says Mountain View resident Lenny Siegel, director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight.

"Chances of a vapor intrusion problem at Mondrian are probably lower than Whisman Station, but they can't be dismissed without more data or mitigation and follow-up sampling," Siegel said in an e-mail.

But Hofer says Shea Homes will not have the indoor air tested in the homes after construction. A sealing layer under the cement slab foundations, or "sub-slab membrane," is already being used at a "substantial cost," to prevent vapor intrusion, Hofer said, even though levels were not high enough for it to be a requirement.

==B Red tape==

The Department of Toxic Substances Control, which usually is in charge of air quality at a site, has classified 505 E. Evelyn Ave. as "no further action required," after a "voluntary cleanup agreement" was completed in 2006.

This was troubling to Siegel, who pointed out that the 21 parts per billion of TCE found in the groundwater at Mondrian is four times higher than the remediation goal the EPA is using at other Mountain View sites, such as Moffett Field, where 5 parts per billion is the goal of a major TCE plume cleanup.

After contacting a dizzying array of agencies, including the EPA, the state Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Regional Water Quality Control Board, the ==I Voice== was unable to determine if any government agency was working to clean up the site's groundwater. A spokesperson from Toxic Substances Control referred the ==I Voice== to Nathan King, the water board's project manager for a nearby site at 303 Ravendale Ave. King could not be reached by press time.

==B RESOURCES==

* The Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Regional Water Quality Control Board have searchable databases [www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov here] and [geotracker.swrcb.ca.gov here]

* An environmental impact report for 505 E. Evelyn Ave. can be downloaded from the city's Web site; a discussion of toxics [laserfiche.mountainview.gov begins on page 80]

* The Academy of Science's TCE human health report summary is available [dels.nas.edu here]

Find this article at:
http://www.mv-voice.com/news/story.php?story_id=1220

September 12, 2009

Loveland at contaminated crossroads with building that housed dry cleaning business

By Douglas Crowl
Loveland Connection

Col

The city of Loveland could face some costly environmental cleanup challenges if it moves forward with purchasing three properties for a possible redevelopment project.

The problem lies within the property of a longtime dry cleaning business in downtown.

Loveland officials put the Leslie's Cleaners building, at the northwest corner of Third Street and Lincoln Avenue, under contract this summer for \$210,600, along with two adjacent properties.

Preliminary tests of soil and water at the property conducted by the city have revealed low-level contaminations, but high enough to likely spark some type of cleanup project.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment knows of the preliminary testing and is awaiting further data, said Walter Avramenko, hazardous waste corrective action unit leader for the state.

Perchloroethylene, or PCE, is the most common contaminate found at the former dry cleaners site. It's a chemical used in a variety of household cleaning product for its ability to remove stains.

High levels of PCE in the ground can cause air contamination in the buildings above, but Avramenko said that doesn't appear to be the case at Leslie's Cleaners.

"Right now, we don't know very much about the site, we have still not received any hard data from the city of Loveland that they are interested in acquiring," Avramenko said.

Assistant City Manager Rod Wensing didn't dispute that there's a possible PCE contamination issue at Leslie Cleaners, but city would not provide actual evidence until it finalizes work at the site, which begins next month and if it determines it will move ahead with the sale.

"We are obviously looking for issues related to contamination," he said.

Leslie Cleaners owner Ralph Steigleder said he knows nothing about possible PCE issues at his business and said he followed state laws during his 26 years of ownership.

He pointed out that the site has been a dry cleaner for decades under various owners, long before the state laws became active in 1980.

Leslie's Cleaners has been on the state's radar for sometime because of groundwater tests on adjacent properties showing containment, including low-levels of PCE, in the ground water, dating back to 1989, Avramenko said.

The latest data came in August 2005, when testing at a former gas station site a block away, at 233 N. Lincoln Ave, revealed PCE at 66 parts per billion.

The state ground water standard for this chemical is 5 parts per billion, so levels this high likely would require some type of action, Avramenko said.

State inspections of Leslie's Cleaners have showed that the company is indeed following the rules, but Avramenko said Steigleder has not allowed additional ground water testing on the site.

Further testing at the cleaners should determine if the contamination is coming from a live source, instead of from an older release of the chemical, he said.

Dry cleaners and PCE contaminations are typical problems in Colorado.

Of the 30 average new contaminated sites that Avramenko's unit sees annually, more than half have come from a dry cleaner.

They usually aren't malicious breaches of the law, but from leaking machines or condensation disposal, Avramenko said.

"There are few people out there who are improperly handling their waste because it's saving them money, but that's a very small minority," he said.

While all indications show that a possible PCE contamination at Leslie's Cleaners isn't a health hazard, it could become a financial burden for the property owner or anyone attempting to purchase the land.

Cleaning up a plume of PCE under a dry cleaner can quickly add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars, often times surpassing what the properties actually worth.

When that happens, property owners sometimes abandon the site, leaving it vacant and typically untouchable, said Deb Phenice, project director for the Colorado Brownfields Foundation.

The foundation works with communities on these types of environmental issues to prevent sites becoming vacant, contaminated parcels that no one will touch.

"It's just a common issue for every town. We absolutely want towns and communities to understand there are resources available to help move those properties into new use," she said.

In fact, the city of Loveland already is working with the Colorado Brownfields Foundation to acquire federal stimulus dollars that could clean up the Leslie's Cleaners property, if the sale moves through, Loveland senior planner Mike Scholl said.

"Anytime there's an environmental issue, it complicates the deal," he said.

A possible reality of Leslie's Cleaner becoming a vacant, contaminated property in the heart of downtown Loveland doesn't exactly fit into the city's plans for revitalizing the area.

The city's interest in purchasing Leslie's Cleaners, along with the former thrift store next door to the north and the Keck Auto parcel to the south, is part of an extensive effort to stimulate growth in downtown Loveland.

The sites first were tapped for a future parking structure, but the city now hopes to partner with a private developer to also build some type of commercial or residential structure to accompany a garage, Scholl said.

Still, it's probably too early to draw conclusions at what could happen to the site until final testing is completed.

"Right now, there's so little known about this particular site, I can not judge if this is a significant problem or not," Avramenko said.



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Former Waterbury factory site needs more cleanup, state says

BY PENELOPE OVERTON | REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

CON N

WATERBURY — Officials at the Waterbury Development Corp. had hoped the former Mattatuck Manufacturing Co. site was ready for construction, but state environmental officials say more cleanup is needed.

The state Department of Environmental Protection says the WDC, which is the landowner as well as the city's economic development arm, has to install a costly system to treat volatile organic compounds detected at the site.

The installation of a soil vapor extraction system, which could cost \$50,000 to \$100,000, would put the project over budget, forcing WDC to find extra grant funding to complete the environmental remediation.

"You can't fight City Hall, or, in this case, the DEP," said WDC chief Leo J. Frank. "We had hoped we could get around this, find another way to do it, but we can't, so we won't. We're just going to keep plugging away."

The 8-acre property has been a trouble spot since Mattatuck closed down, leaving generations of toxic solvents and metal grinding waste behind from its production of brakes, transmission cables and automotive parts.

A former owner spent \$3 million toward cleanup before selling the property to the brownfields arm of the WDC. In total, with federal and state grant funding, the environmental remediation costs will top \$6 million.

Once cleaned up, the land will be turned over to a private developer to build a community center and a retail plaza. A funeral home will be built over the area where the volatile organic compounds were found.

To read the complete story see The Sunday Republican or our electronic edition at <http://republicanamerican.ct.newsmemory.com>.

What do you think? Share your comments using the form below.

CORN

Groundwater contamination found in Milford

After a common dry cleaning solvent was found in the ground, wells are being drilled to determine how far it spread

By Frank Juliano
STAFF WRITER

Updated: 06/04/2009 12:51:36 AM EDT

MILFORD -- Three test wells dug Wednesday at the Robert Treat Apartments will determine the extent of groundwater contamination from a long-closed dry cleaner.

Milford Cleaning Village operated at 987-995 Bridgeport Ave. for decades before closing in 2004. The apartment complex is directly behind the shuttered business.

"I've lived here 35 years and they were open went I got here," said Herb Batterson, a resident of the 124-unit complex.

Test wells on the dry cleaner's property and at the Treat Apartments have found elevated levels of a common dry-cleaning solvent, said Dennis Schain, a spokesman for the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The perchloroethylene -- also known as tetrachloroethylene, PCE, and PERC -- was found at both locations recently, Schain said, and the new wells dug Wednesday are to locate the extent of the plume. Test results will likely be available in a month, he said.

There is no immediate health hazard, officials said, because the apartment complex is served by public

water mains owned by the Regional Water Authority.

Dr. A. Dennis McBride, the city health director, said apartment residents will be kept informed by his department of all developments and test results. An information sheet prepared by the Milford Health Department notes that while tests have shown PCE in large amounts causes liver and kidney cancer in animals, its effect on humans isn't known. Based on this evidence, PCE is considered a probable increase to the risk of cancer in people, the fact sheet states.

Owners of both the apartment complex and the former dry cleaner are cooperating with the investigation, Schain said, and the ultimate cost of remediation will be billed to the owners of the commercial property, 993 Bridgeport Avenue LLC.

State officials said it is not clear yet whether any people have been exposed to the PCE.

Deputy DEP Commissioner Amey Marrella said in a prepared statement, "If these tests show there are elevated levels of PCE in the groundwater, it may be necessary to conduct further tests in some buildings. This would allow us to determine if vapors from the groundwater are migrating through cracks in building foundations and entering into the indoor air at levels requiring remediation. If this turned out to be the case -- and it's too early to know -- steps can and will be taken to quickly and efficiently remediate the problem."

Soil contaminated with PCE was removed from the commercial property in 2007, but groundwater samples indicated that the plume was migrating off the former Milford Cleaning Village property toward the adjacent Robert Treat Apartments property, DEP officials said.

Batterson said that residents in the nine-building

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complex are satisfied at the officials' response to the problem, and with the letter sent Tuesday to all residents by the management office explaining the contamination.

A test well in a courtyard was surrounded with yellow caution tape Wednesday afternoon, while workers from Connecticut Test Borings of Seymour put fresh cement around a newly capped well in a parking lot. A machine was digging the third well nearby. An employee declined to speak to a reporter.

"I'm in charge of the pool, and it's been filled for the season," Batterson said. "I understand that it will not be affected by any of this, unless there is a leak in the lining."

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CSX says contamination near old rail yard poses no risks

BY MARK BASCH | STORY UPDATED AT 6:37 AM ON TUESDAY, SEP. 1, 2009

More CSX Transportation coverage

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CSX Transportation says there is no danger to residents, but it is letting one Westside neighborhood know that it has four some contaminants in ground water near an old rail yard site.

The rail yard south of Beaver Street between McDuff Avenue and Edgewood Avenue ceased operations in 1985. But Jacksonville-based CSX still owns the property and has a dispatch center and other operations adjacent to the site. The company has been monitoring ground water there since then and discovered last year that contamination had spread to r areas. Recently, it found contaminants in water 20 feet below the surface in a neighborhood just south of the rail yard sit

CSX said the contaminants include solvents that were used as de-greasers and cleaners and also some petroleum product

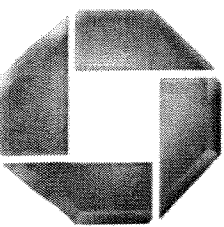
CSX said the affected residents, which are largely on Warrington Street, are on city water hookups and should not be affe by the contamination.

"We don't think there's any danger at all to the community," CSX spokesman Gary Sease said.

"I think they're probably correct," said John Davis, a professional geologist with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection.

Davis said CSX has had a remedial action plan in place to clean up contaminants on the rail yard property and is in the process of modifying that plan to deal with contamination outside the property. But that plan is not final yet.

CSX said about 75 property owners were notified in mid-August about possible contamination in the area. The company is holding a public information session for those residents today from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at 116 Druid St., a CSX building adja to the rail yard site.



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User Comments



people just love living next

Submitted by apvbguy on Mon. 8/31/2009 at 8:53 pm

people just love living next to a toxic waste site. why no mention of what CSX plans to do to clean the contamination other than the vague nonsense offered by CSX where is the enforcement side of the FLA DEP? isn't creating a toxic waste site against the law? shouldn't the state be issuing clean up orders? how about penalties violation of the laws? where are they? what about the federal EPA?

Why doesn't the T/U ask these simple questions instead of just regugitating the CSX press release? how about you guys doing some real investigative reporting?

And the newspapers wonder why people are rejecting their product, there is no product to embrace!

when you put clowns in charge don't be surprised when a circus breaks out

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That property has been

Submitted by Army33 on Mon. 8/31/2009 at 8:12 pm

That property has been cleaned up for a few months now. The road was closed but is now reopened. How come this wasn't a story worthy of news six months ago they were removing all the contaminated soil from there?

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This explains all the violence

Submitted by scatristan on Tue. 9/1/2009 at 4:18 am

Committed on the Northside! It was something in the water!...NOT

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A look at Evans and the nearby contamination

posted by ErikaHobbs on Nov 10, 2009 1:52:29 PM

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Documents from the Orange County Environmental Protection Division corroborate the district's assertion that the land and water under strip mall next to the Evans main campus at Pine Hills and Silver Star roads is contaminated.

Both the soil and groundwater hold questionable or unacceptable levels of chemicals related to dry-cleaning solvents. The suspected sources are King of Cleaners (which still operates and has been remediated before) and the former Thrifty Cleaner, which I believe had been replaced by a nail salon.

In August, the district received a clean-up estimate from Professional Service Industries, Inc. that showed:

1. removing affected soil at 3 sites could cost as much as \$545,000
2. groundwater cleanup could cost as much as \$2.3 million
3. 10 years of monitoring afterward could reach \$2 million

You can see cost for land -- so far -- here.

The district can -- and has -- remediate school sites (Lee Middle, West Orange High, Maitland Middle, Winter Park 9th grade center and Union Park Middle all have had various typed of contamination problems and have been cleaned).

But staff says they cannot clean up the strip mall because it would take too long to do it.

And although rebuilding on the current main campus location only had been a viable option in the past, staff now say that isn't an option, either, because storm drainage isn't sufficient.

Now, the district will be spending millions to buy up churches to meet the lightening-speed timeline it has promised politicians it would meet. And the location, I have been told, may cause access or traffic problems.

In the meantime, there are no plans to remove the strip mall by the county.

Sure, the district will build a big, beautiful high school.

But Evans will still be sitting next to the pawn shop and other "blight" county commissioners, Sen. Gary Siplin, the school board and others promised to remove. We know now that the area harbors contamination, as well. All the while, the 9th grade center will sit empty on -- as far as we know -- pristine, green land.

Is this the "revitalization" Siplin and local leaders promised? Is this the best plan the district can come up with?

Share your thoughts.

I've attached a copy of the new plan for your review..

Filed under: Erika Hobbs, EVANS, Orange County School Board, Orange County schools

COMMENTS

Let's be perfectly blunt here. If the school board would have stood up to the racists in Ocoee, OCPS could build the school further west where this wouldn't be an issue. We all know why Ocoeeans wouldn't let Evans build out there.

Posted by Orlandoan | November 10, 2009 at 04:07 PM

I feel for the Pine Hills community. They were promised a beautiful, safe school for the students to learn. With that strip mall in place, nothing will change. Those buildings need to go, and if its promised before information is disclosed, its not the communities fault. Stop screwing the communities and take responsibility. Give Pine Hills what was promised. Use your resources. Siplin, are you out there?

Posted by: fred of this | November 10, 2009 at 06:33 PM

VERIFY YOUR COMMENT

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Central may not reopen

11/18/2008, 10:17 pm

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A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Melissa'.

Melissa Garzanelli, melissag@mywebtimes.com

A series of tests for contaminants may determine whether or not Central Elementary School will reopen.

The immediate focus of school officials, the district architect and city building officials was to determine if the building was sound following flooding in September. Now, the Illinois Department of Public Health and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency mandates testing be done to see if the building is contaminated.

"You want a clean bill of health when you go back to the building," said George Riegle of Green and Associates, the district's architect.

The building could have been exposed to a variety of contaminants. It must be tested for air quality to ensure mold levels are acceptable and asbestos has been contained. It must also undergo bacterial testing.

The building also was potentially contaminated by a nearby brownfield. Since the water that flooded the building came primarily from the water table, not the river, the contaminants in the brownfield may have leached into the building.

Another concern is the asbestos insulation surrounding pipes in the crawl space. With water flooding the crawl space, that asbestos may have leaked into the water and contaminated the rest of the building.

All test results are expected to be submitted to the district by the December board meeting, when the matter will be discussed again.

Making the matter more difficult are federal and state requirements that state that if a public building sustains damage more than 50 percent of its appraised value, then the building must either be raised up higher than the 100-year flood plain or be demolished, said Mike Sutfin, Ottawa's building inspector.

"And it's cumulative," he said, noting that the government will add on the costs of previous flooding. "When you get to more than 50 percent, you come to a pretty critical choice."

Aside from the contaminants, Riegle placed the total cost to repair the damage to the building at more than \$1 million, with insurance covering the cost of returning the building to pre-flood condition. If the remediation of contaminants comes into play, that number could skyrocket.

Because the county was declared a disaster area following the flood, the district will also be eligible for government funding to cover 75 percent of the damages. However, the government often will not fund reconstruction in a flood plain.

Riegle presented options if the district was forced to demolish Central. A new building at the Shepherd Middle School site would cost between \$20.5 million and almost \$23 million, depending on the capacity of the building. That cost does not include the additional acreage that would need to be purchased, between 35 and 47 acres.

The district architect's report will be available at the district's Web site, <http://d141.lasall.k12.il.us/>.

The district must restore one of the two boilers in the building to prevent pipes from freezing as temperatures drop. Leaking pipes would compound problems with the building. That work is expected to be done as soon as possible.

Sutfin explained that while the assessment process has seemed long, it is important that all the proper steps be taken. If contaminants are found, the remediation process will be even longer as the IDPH and the IEPA will step in to design a plan and make sure it is followed exactly.

"I'm sorry for the delays. It's not because no one is doing anything. There is a process," he said. "Maybe there are no contaminants and you can move forward with restoration, but there is the potential for contaminants and if there is, you'll have to make a tough decision."

By DAVID FITZGERALD - dfitzgerald@nwherald.com

State: Chemical testing needed

ALGONQUIN – An Illinois Environmental Protection Agency official said Thursday during a meeting with concerned citizens in downtown Algonquin that the groundwater directly beneath him was contaminated.

Gary King, a remediation manager with IDOT, told neighbors that his department is looking to test the gas trapped in the soil on their property to see whether that contamination could have seeped into their homes and businesses.

Soil and groundwater samples taken by the Illinois Department of Transportation in preparation for the Algonquin Western Bypass turned up trichloroethylene, a colorless liquid used for cleaning metal parts, in the area around the old Toastmaster building, at 401 Washington St. The building, which King called a "classic brownfield eyesore," once produced irons, shell casings and appliances.

The Illinois Department of Transportation took 21 soil gas samples around the contaminated area. Three of those samples taken along Main Street came back with contamination levels above Illinois Department of Public Health standards, King said.

"Our plan is to do some further investigating to see if there are impacts to homes or commercial businesses in this neighborhood," King said.

Steven Gobelman, a soil and groundwater expert with IDOT, said his agency planned to buy the Toastmaster site and remove the contamination from the soil. That, he said, would cut off the source for the groundwater contamination.

Gobelman said no wells were in the area. He set up between 30 and 40 monitoring wells around downtown – all on public land – to test how far the contamination had spread. He said it dissipated by the time it reached La Fox River Drive.

A number of residents and business owners signed up to have IEPA officials test their property to see whether there is a chance of trichloroethylene getting into their homes, although King said he had a limited budget for the testing. The chemical can cause nervous system effects, liver and lung damage, abnormal heartbeat, coma and possibly death.

Mathew Perrone, a patent attorney with an office on Main Street, said he asked to have his business tested to give him peace of mind and let him take action if there was a risk.

"My secretary just had a baby, and she will be bringing it into the office," Perrone said.

King said systems used to prevent radon vapors from entering homes could be installed in properties if they were found to be at risk.

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Dry cleaners' toxic legacy: Find sites near you

By Michael Hawthorne, Ryan Mark, Joe Germuska, Darnell Little and Brian Boyer | Tribune Staff

July 26, 2009

Illinois officials have identified 415 dry cleaners statewide where the toxic solvent perchloroethylene, also known as PCE or perc, has contaminated soil or poses a threat to nearby water supplies. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has signed off on cleanups at another 521 sites. In some cases, the spills date back to previous owners and predate environmental regulations.

Potential health risks are greatest at 30 sites where drinking water or neighboring properties are threatened, according to an industry-financed cleanup fund. This application can help you to find sites near your home, learn if and when they were decontaminated, and see how much it has cost to clean them to date.

To learn more about the problem, check out our series, **Poison in the well**.

Download the data

used to build this application.

Source:

Drycleaner Environmental Response Fund of Illinois,

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency,

Tribune research.

Look up contamination near your address

Search

For example, 435 N. Michigan Ave. Chicago, IL or Glenview.

High priority cleanups

Of the 415 dry cleaning sites in Illinois known to be contaminated, these 30 have been targeted for high-priority cleanups by the Drycleaner Environmental Response Fund of Illinois, an industry-financed insurance fund.

Click on a cleaner for more info.

Norgetown Cleaners

Arlington Heights: Norgetown On Rand

Silvio Cleaners

Barrington: Barrington Elegance Cleaners

Brite Way Cleaners

Belleville: State Cleaners

Bolingbrook: Lupo Cleaners

Burling Professional Cleaners Inc.

Bradley:

Champaign: Garbers Modern Cleaners

Crystal Lake: One Hour Crystal Cleaners

Darien: Darien Cleaners

Deerfield: Lee's Hanalei's Cleaners

Fox Lake: Bavaros Cleaners

Frankfort: Plaza Cleaners Inc.

Freeport: Johnny-On-The-Spot

Glenview: Scot Cleaners

Mt Prospect: Dun Rite Cleaners Inc.

Naperville: Modaff Cleaners

New Lenox: Hutchins Professional Cleaners

Normal: Hansons Cleaners

Northfield: Youngren Cleaners

Palatine: Inverness Cleaners & Tailors Inc.

Park Ridge: Burchard's Clothes Care

Round Lake: One Hour Dry Cleaners

Shelbyville: Custom Care Cleaners

St Charles: Fox Valley Cleaners

West Dundee: Kane County Cleaners

Western Spring: Spring Cleaner

Wilmington: Wilmington Cleaners & Furriers

Woodridge: Yorktown Cleaners

High priority cleanup site Site still contaminated Cleanup approved by Illinois EPA

Click on a marker for dry cleaner details.

chicagotribune.com

TRIBUNE WATCHDOG

Dry cleaners leave a toxic legacy

Despite cleanup effort, chemicals still taint hundreds of Illinois sites

By Michael Hawthorne

Tribune reporter

July 26, 2009

For decades, one of the nation's most widely used dry cleaning solvents was billed as a marvel of modern chemistry that could safely remove dirt and stains from clothing.

Shops sprang up to take advantage of the chemical, perchloroethylene, also known as PCE or perc. People became familiar with the sharp odor of clothes freshly removed from plastic wrap, a sign that perc was used to clean them.

But over the years, with little if any notice to the public, the often sloppy use of perchloroethylene has poisoned hundreds of sites in Illinois. As scientists linked perc exposure to cancer, liver damage, neurological problems and other ailments, regulators found problems in virtually every town with a dry cleaner.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency has signed off on cleanups of about 500 sites since the late 1990s. More than 400 polluted locations remain, though few neighbors may know it. Most are in Chicago and its suburbs.

At more than two dozen of these sites, state records show, the dry cleaning solvent threatens nearby water wells and residential areas. The most infamous example is in south suburban Crestwood, where village officials secretly drew water from a contaminated well for more than two decades.

Although none of the others appears to be as severe as Crestwood, the potential risks are great enough that the sites have been moved to the top of a state cleanup list.

To help clean up the contamination, the dry cleaning industry persuaded state lawmakers a decade ago to create an insurance fund financed by annual licenses and fees on the amount of perc used. The fund is expected to spend \$2.75 million this year to help scour pollution from about 100 sites.

More money could have been earmarked, but last fall former Gov. Rod Blagojevich and legislative leaders took \$2 million out of the fund to help balance the state budget.

Developed in the 19th Century, perc became the solvent of choice for most dry cleaners after World War I. For years it was used in massive quantities with few if any rules to protect workers from noxious vapors or neighbors from chemical spills.

"You have to remember that for years there weren't any guidelines for how to dispose of PCE," said H. Patrick Eriksen, administrator of the cleaners' insurance fund. "People have told me they would use a little perc at the end of the day to clean the floors, or they'd hose it down the drain and it would leak out of sewer mains."

[Handwritten signature]

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The public can be exposed to perc by drinking or showering in contaminated water, playing in polluted dirt and breathing air in homes where vapors have seeped in from the soil. The amount of the chemical that lingers on clothes is not considered a significant threat.

At most contaminated sites, the problem was identified years ago, as it was in Crestwood. But cleaning up the pollution is a long, expensive process. Tons of soil may have to be dug out and shipped to hazardous-waste landfills. Or chemicals are injected into hot spots to break down the chemical into harmless substances.

Many dry cleaners are small-business owners waiting for help from the insurance fund to evaluate and clean up contamination, sometimes left by previous operators. Landlords are reluctant to tackle the problem unless they are looking to sell.

And the Illinois EPA, overwhelmed by the number of polluted sites, allows most owners to decide when and how to clean up the contamination, guided by state rules that determine how the property can be used in the future.

Neighbors, meanwhile, often are left in the dark.

Tonya Hagenbaumer found out the backyard of her Naperville home was contaminated five years ago, when an environmental consultant peeked over the fence and asked to test some soil as she and friends lay by the pool. A month later, a jargon-filled report arrived in the mail indicating that perc had leached into her yard from a dry cleaner next door.

The owners of Modaff Cleaners, 537 W. 87th St., and the strip mall that houses the business have known about the per spill since at least 2002, records show. Levels of the chemical in soil around the site are as high as 400 parts per million, well above the state standard of 240 ppm.

Levels in Hagenbaumer's yard are much lower. But she and her husband, Chris, still are wary of letting their three children play in the backyard. They blew through their savings hiring an environmental attorney to translate reports and pressure the dry cleaner to act, yet the site still isn't cleaned up.

"Everybody is standing around pointing fingers at each other," Hagenbaumer said. "It feels like we're the only people who care."

Records show the dry cleaner's consultants have considered digging up the contaminated soil or injecting oxygen into the ground to speed up the degradation of perc. A woman who answered the phone at the dry cleaner said no one was available to comment.

At another site slated for a high-priority cleanup, in north suburban Fox Lake, residents were warned in May that their wells could be contaminated with perc.

The EPA and the Illinois Department of Public Health sent letters to dozens of homes because the solvent and related chemicals were found in groundwater beyond the property lines of two dry cleaners, one of which has been shuttered. One of the chemicals, dichloroethylene, also turned up in two Fox Lake community wells, though the water is treated before it is piped to residents.

Perc levels in groundwater near Baveros Cleaners, 41 E. Grand Ave., and neighboring Lakeland Plaza are as high as 24 parts per million, nearly 5,000 times higher than federal drinking water standards, records show. Investigators also found vinyl chloride, a related chemical, at levels 1,500 times higher than allowed.

Nothing bad has turned up yet in private wells, according to state records. But several residents said they still are taking precautions.

"Just because of the scare we go with bottled water in case it starts coming this way," said Melissa Jurik, who lives on Holly Avenue just a few blocks from the polluted sites.

Another neighbor, Craig Curtis, said he initially decided not to test his well because others came back clean. He's reconsidering now that he discovered his well is only 45 feet deep and could be more easily contaminated, but cost is a

issue. "Other than that letter saying there is a problem there really are no resources," he said.

Bavaro's could end up being one of the more expensive sites to clean up. If it turns out like some of the more troublesome spills that already have been addressed, the solution likely will involve carting away contaminated soil and injecting chemicals into the ground to break down the pollution.

One of the owners, Myoung Jin Yu, said he has turned the matter over to consultants being paid by the dry cleaners insurance fund. The contamination existed when he took over the business in 2004, he said.

In west suburban Oak Park, nearly eight years passed between the time perc contamination was identified at Zephyr Cleaners, 130 W. Chicago Ave., and when the EPA signed off on the cleanup, records show. The insurance fund paid nearly \$290,000, making it one of the most expensive claims to date.

Crews broke up the concrete floor in the back of the shop and used a conveyor belt to move 44 cubic yards of contaminated soil into a dump truck, records show. Then a catalyst was injected twice into the ground to lower the amount of perc to a level acceptable under state standards.

After a fire damaged the World's Largest Laundromat & Drycleaner, 6246 W. Cermak Rd. in Berwyn, the owner rebuilt the structure with a device that extracts old solvents from the ground and filters them into the air, records show. Such an elaborate system usually isn't available to businesses seeking to continue operating in an existing building.

At United Cleaners in southwest suburban Lemont, crews trucked away 230 tons of contaminated soil and cooked it in a device that steamed out the chemicals, records show.

Efforts to reach owners of those cleaned-up sites were unsuccessful last week.

Dozens of other sites required far less work. The state approved about 200 after they installed "engineered barriers," which in most of those cases meant the owners paved over the pollution with asphalt. The EPA has concluded that is acceptable as long as buildings are never constructed on the contaminated property.

As the health dangers from perc became more widely understood and federal regulations got tougher, dry cleaners have steadily reduced their use of the chemical. Cleaners in residential buildings must stop using it by 2020 -- and some already have switched to perc-free methods -- but the Obama administration is mulling whether to phase it out altogether.

"This is another example of a chemical used for years and years with hardly any attention paid to how toxic it is to people," said Peter Orris, chief of environmental and occupational medicine at the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. "Now we're left with a big mess."

Tribune reporter Nicole Leonhardt contributed to this report.

mhawthorne@tribune.com

Online database

Look up your address to see

if there is a contaminated

site near you.

chicagotribune

.com/drycleaners

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chnapf, Lawrence

From: Schnapf, Lawrence

Sent: Wednesday, March 25, 2009 1:04 PM

To: lschnapf@aol.com

DL (MGP)

Ameren's cleanup plan gets initial OK from Champaign

by Mike Monson

Wednesday March 25, 2009

HAMPAIGN – The city council gave its verbal support Tuesday to AmerenIP's plan to clean up a former manufactured-gas plant site at Fifth and Hill streets, starting in mid-April.

But council members were less enthusiastic about an administration proposal under which city staff would work with AmerenIP to transfer ownership of the 2.4-acre site to the city once the cleanup is complete for future development.

"Frankly, I don't see why it's important we own the property," said council member Marci Dodds. Council members put off a vote on the ownership question, but did appear to give their OK to having city planning staff work with residents in planning future uses for the site.

Meanwhile, neighborhood residents continued to express dissatisfaction with AmerenIP's cleanup plans, saying that the Illinois EPA-approved plan doesn't call for cleaning up contaminated groundwater that they allege could recontaminate the site over time.

"We do not believe for one second it is safe to leave that contaminated groundwater in place," said Claudia Lennhoff, an organizer with the Fifth & Hill Neighborhood Rights Campaign.

Lennhoff alleged that other sites across the country have had problems with dangerous vapors being released from the ground from contaminated groundwater beneath. She said AmerenIP needs to be doing indoor vapor intrusion testing of homes in the neighborhood to make sure that isn't happening now. And she alleged groundwater could eventually recontaminate the soil, even though Ameren plans to excavate the top 10 feet of soil on the north half of the site.

Residents, speaking during public participation, asked the city council to repeal a city groundwater ordinance that prohibits city residents from drilling private water wells, which AmerenIP has been able to use as a legal justification for leaving the groundwater in place.

"If this was Cherry Hills, it would be cleaned up," said Maggie Cook, 310 E. Hill St.

But council member Vic McIntosh said the city shouldn't repeal the groundwater ordinance.

"If we reverse this ordinance, the downside for us is everybody could go out and drill," he said. AmerenIP's cleanup of the site should begin in mid-April and take about a year to complete, at a cost of up to \$7 million, said Brian Martin, a consulting environmental scientist for Ameren. The utility plans to remove the top 10 feet of contaminated soil on the north half of the site and replace it with clean soil. The utility also would use a chemical oxidation process to clean soil and groundwater up to a depth of 20 to 28 feet, he said.

A large tent with air-handling units with carbon filters will be set up over the areas being excavated, and there will be perimeter air monitoring to ensure the neighborhood is safe, said Peter Sazama, project manager with PSC of Columbia Gas of Ameren consultant.

Soil excavation and chemical oxidation treatment "will contribute to an improvement of the groundwater," Sazama said.

"Everything is clean out there," Martin said. "But in the meantime, there's no potential for future contamination."

Mayor Jerry Schweighart complimented AmerenIP for moving quickly to clean up the site after acquiring Illinois Power five years ago.

"I feel Ameren has been very cooperative with the city and the EPA," he said. "I'm sure you don't want to go through all this expense and do a half-baked job."

The Fifth and Hill site is contaminated with benzene and other compounds generated by the former coal gas plant, which operated there from the late 1800s until the early 1930s.

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September 28, 2010



City finds groundwater contamination

Lot located on North 12th Street

Arthur Foulkes
The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE — Terre Haute officials are concerned about soil and groundwater contamination recently discovered on the city's near-north side.

Earlier this year, city officials hired an environmental consulting firm to test the soil and groundwater around a vacant lot at 301 N. 12th St., formerly the site of Chicago Towel Co., a dry-cleaning operation. The test results showed higher-than-permitted levels of tetrachloroethylene, also known as perchloroethylene or PCE, a chemical used for dry cleaning and metal degreasing.

High concentrations of PCE can cause dizziness, headache, nausea, difficulty speaking and walking and even death, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"This is a first for us," Pat Martin, Terre Haute City Planner, told the Terre Haute Board of Public Works and Safety at a board meeting Monday. "We don't have a script for this."

As soon as the contamination was discovered, the Terre Haute Department of Engineering contacted the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Martin told the Board of Works. IDEM, in turn, contacted F.W. Means & Co. Properties of Burbank, Calif., which IDEM identifies as the owner of the property.

IDEM is ordering F.W. Means to pinpoint the cause and extent of the contamination. The company has 45 days to report its findings, according to a letter from IDEM to F.W. Means dated Sept. 22.

"Failure to provide this information in a timely and complete manner may subject you to civil penalties," the letter states.

There are a few homes around the former dry cleaning business site. However, much of the adjacent property is vacant land owned by the Indiana State University Board of Trustees, according to county records. ISU was also immediately contacted when the soil and groundwater tests were received, Martin said.

In doing the testing, Bruce Carter Associates LLC, an environmental consulting firm, took soil borings between 28 and 32 feet in depth, the company's report to the city states. The report recommends further groundwater testing. It also recommends testing nearby homes for

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THE TRI-STATE'S NEWS AND WEATHER LEADER

Toxic fumes confirmed at Evansville daycare

Posted: Feb 23, 2011 11:23 PM EST

Updated: Feb 24, 2011 7:08 AM EST

By Brandon Bartlett - [bio](#) | [email](#)

Posted by Adam Thiele - [email](#)

EVANSVILLE, IN (WFIE) - New information on the possible source of toxic fumes that forced an Evansville daycare operation to shut down.

The IDEM says those vapors are coming from the daycare facility. The source must be found before this building can ever reopen.

"The levels were of a concern," said Dwayne Caldwell of the Vanderburgh County Health Department.

Even though no child has gotten sick from the toxic fumes the right decision was made to close this facility down and stop the risk of exposure to the chemical TCE.

"Any time you're dealing with children you want to be careful," Caldwell says.

Originally environmental experts thought the vapors were coming from the old Swanson Nunn building across the street. But another round of tests indicted what many parents feared, the source of the vapors lie somewhere inside the Carver Day Care Center.

"If their kids have gone there and were exposed to the levels that we're seeing now, their bodies probably shed it in about a week of not being exposed," Caldwell says.

Caldwell says the day care building was once owned by Swanson Nunn. It housed their offices and had a garage in the back where there are classrooms.

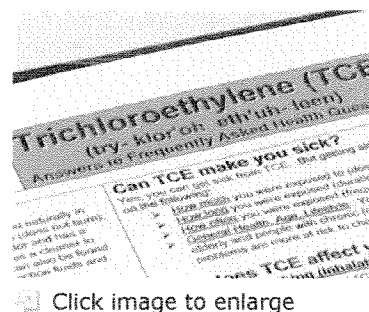
"TCE has been used for a very long time as a degreaser and in dry cleaning, even as an anesthetic. So whatever that building was used for, maybe many years ago, could be the source," Caldwell says.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management has asked a consultant to put together a plan on how to remedy this situation by March 4th.

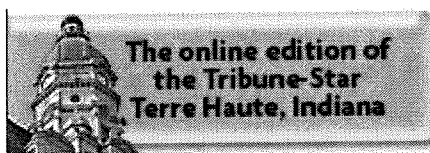
"Everyone knows that this is really important for the day care to resume operations. It's important for the families there, it's important for the day care, the community itself and everyone is working really hard to find a solution as soon as possible," said Amy Hartsock of IDEM.

The health department says results from another round of tests are expected Thursday afternoon.

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Standard Register says cleanup effort nearly complete

The Tribune-Star

TERRE HAUTE May 04, 2009 11:16 pm

IND

— The source of perchloroethylene (PCE) contamination at Standard Register's former Terre Haute facility has largely been cleaned up, the company said Monday.

Recent soil sampling results from the property on North Fruitridge Avenue indicate that the cleanup system (soil vapor extraction) used by Standard Register in June 2008 has resulted in a 97 percent reduction of PCE levels in the source area, the company stated in a news release.

The current results indicate an average PCE level of 201 parts per billion (ppb), down from the pre-cleanup June 2008 reading of 7,895 ppb.

Sampling results were obtained from a consulting firm, Quality Environmental Professionals Inc. (QEPI).

QEPI's sampling of the soil is part of the remediation work plan that Standard Register submitted to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management in March 2008.

As it has in the past, Standard Register maintains it was not the source of the PCE contamination. "Records indicate that Standard Register never stored PCE in the area of the contamination," the company stated.

"The soil contamination in this area strongly indicates that its source, as well as the source of the contamination in the nearby Edgebrook subdivision, is not Standard Register but rather the original operator of the facility, Unique Graphics Corporation," the news release stated.

Unique Graphics no longer exists, said attorney Kevin Braig of Dinsmore and Shohl, which represents Standard Register.

In a related update, the company says that current groundwater sampling results indicate that no new PCE detections have been made during the last two rounds of testing. "No additional houses have been added to the list," Braig said.

QEPI has said these results are encouraging, according to the news release. However, further remediation and mitigation work will continue at Standard Register's former facility and in the Edgebrook neighborhood. These efforts include the installation of vapor mitigation systems in about a dozen homes showing low levels of PCE in air quality tests.

"We think we've sampled everyone in the area who potentially could have indoor air problems," Braig said.

The systems were placed in any home that showed detectable levels of PCE in the air "to be proactive," based on IDEM guidance, Braig said.

Also, Standard Register has paid for about 12 homes in the area to be connected to Indiana American Water Co., and he anticipates another seven soon will be connected.

When the work is finished, all homes that had wells with detectable levels of PCE will be connected to Indiana American, with the exception of one family that has chosen not to be connected, Braig said.

Standard Register is still gathering data related to indoor air testing to incorporate into its remediation plan, which ultimately must be approved by IDEM, Braig said.

"Once that's done and we feel we have our arms around the issue completely, then we'll submit an addendum to the work plan," he said.

When IDEM has the amended plan and believes it can approve the plan, there will be a formal public

The Truth - Local News

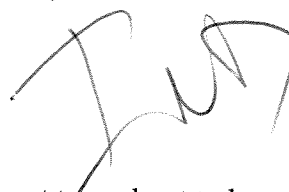
Tests show chemical plume in Goshen is of limited size
Degreaser filtered into the ground near a few houses owned by the city.

Published: Monday, October 26, 2009 -- The Truth, A

Last updated: 10/25/2009 11:54:49 PM

By Justin Leighty

Truth Staff



GOSHEN -- Testing showed groundwater contamination by a solvent turned out to be confined to just a few city-owned homes, according to a city official.

When the city did routine environmental tests on the old Hawks Furniture building, it found elevated levels of PCE, an industrial solvent used in dry cleaning or as a metal degreaser.

Officials tracked the plume of contamination back to the 200 block of South Third Street, said Mark Brinson, Goshen's community development director.

"We installed vapor-intrusion-mitigation systems, mechanical systems that we installed in three residential properties where the levels of PCE exceeded the long-term exposure levels. We just received reports back indicating that they'd had a substantial impact in reducing those levels," Brinson said.

The systems are in the basements of three houses owned by the city's redevelopment commission and rented out. The systems take the PCE vapors and keep them from wafting throughout the homes. The commission paid to install the systems.

"The environmental consultants, based on the data, don't think there's any real exposure to other properties," Brinson said. "It was a small plume."

Brinson said the Indiana Department of Environmental Management is investigating the groundwater contamination. It didn't originate on any city-owned sites, Brinson said.

Story Link: <http://www.etruth.com/Know/News/Story.aspx?id=496729>

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Report: More testing needed for Lusher Street ground water contamination

Originally printed at <http://www.wsbt.com/news/local/52018872.html>

ELKHART — Investigators with the Environmental Protection Agency are zeroing in on an Elkhart neighborhood, trying to determine the size and scope of contaminated ground water.

The “~~Lusher Street Ground Water Contamination~~” site is bordered on the north by the St. Joseph River, Hively Avenue to the south, Oakland Avenue to the east, and Nappanee Street on the west.

Darlene Miller lives in the area. She said she’s concerned and frustrated.

“When I take my medicine at night I turn the tap water on and it’s well water. I drink it and I go, ‘OK, I’m getting well with my vitamins, but I’m hurting myself with this water, maybe,’” said Miller.

She wishes she knew. Miller has lived in her Elkhart home near Franklin Street with her husband Bill for about 15 years, all the while wondering if the well water they drink is safe.

“It’s a concern,” she said.

It’s also a concern to investigators with the Environmental Protection Agency and federal health officials. In ~~2008 the one square-mile area was~~ added to the EPA’s National Priorities List as one of the nation’s most contaminated hazardous waste sites eligible for cleanup under the EPA Superfund program.

The EPA ~~discovered contamination in 1987~~ when industrial solvents were found to have soaked into the soil over the years and then into the ground water. The EPA is still trying to find the source.

This week, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry issued a report recommending the EPA and the Indiana Dept. of Environmental Management “~~monitor ground water contamination, conduct additional well sampling, and conduct more indoor air monitoring.~~” The report added, “these data will allow scientists to further evaluate the potential for public health hazards at the site.”

The EPA said it’s doing that as part of the Superfund cleanup program. As a Superfund cleanup site, the EPA is currently in the investigating stage, to determine “the scope of the contamination and the sources of the plume as well as possible cleanup options.”

The ATSDR said “~~at least 200 people were exposed to chemicals in drinking water wells near Lusher Avenue in Elkhart in the late 1980s,~~” and went on to say an estimated 53 people were exposed to

levels that “may put them at greater risk for adverse health effects.”

In 2006, further testing showed elevated levels of two chemicals in private wells. Residents were supplied with bottled drinking water and carbon filters. And since 1987, most of the 2,600 homes in the area have connected to city water and are unaffected.

In its report, the ATSDR recommends those people who live in the area who still use private wells should continue to take precautions, by using bottled water or filtration systems.

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EPA concerned about oxygen loss in Kansas homes

Eds: **UDPATES** with details on problems, quotes from EPA official and emergency management planner for Sedgwick County, background on oxygen depletion.

By MARIA SUDEKUM FISHER

Associated Press Writer

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (AP) -- The Environmental Protection Agency is investigating reports of potential oxygen depletion in homes in four south-central Kansas counties.

Oxygen depletion, which can occur when carbon dioxide, methane or other soil vapors seep into buildings, can threaten residents' health. But David Bryan, an EPA spokesman in Kansas City, Kan., said Thursday that no major injuries had been reported.

Bryan said his office in August began investigating reports of carbon dioxide and methane vapors in homes after heavy rainfall in Sedgwick, Butler, Sumner and Harper counties in September 2008.

Residents then reported having trouble with pilot lights on their water or gas heaters in their basements. There also were reports of light-headedness and the death of one household pet, a dog, from apparent carbon dioxide poisoning.

Rick Shellenbarger, emergency management planner for Sedgwick County, said about 12 homes in the county reported the problems to local officials after the heavy rainfall. The other counties reported fewer problems, he said. It's unclear how many homes could be affected.

Several of the Sedgwick County houses had oxygen levels at 18 percent or lower, Shellenbarger said. An area is considered oxygen deficient when oxygen falls below 19.5 percent.

"If it saturates the air to the point where it reduces the oxygen level then obviously it becomes a health concern," he said of any offending gas.

The EPA plans to collect groundwater and soil vapor samples from properties where residents reported the oxygen depletion. The agency hopes to determine if there are chemical pollutants or contamination in the groundwater and soil that may be causing or contributing to the problem.

Its lab in Ada, Okla., would conduct a long-term study to determine if the cause is manmade or naturally occurring. Bryan said the investigation was in its initial phases, and it was unclear when results would help pinpoint the cause of the depletion.

"It's quite the mystery at this point," he said.

The EPA said in a news release that there appears to be "little or no published research on oxygen depletion and carbon dioxide buildup in homes due to gas intrusion."

The agency advised residents in the four counties to check for oxygen depletion in basements by testing their pilot lights.

"That's the big thing that clued us that there might be a problem," Bryan said.

