

Schnapf, Lawrence

From: Schnapf, Lawrence
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2008 3:47 PM
To: LSchnapf@aol.com
Subject: VI

PROVIDENCE

No matter which way you look from inside the city's new Adelaide High School in the Reservoir Triangle neighborhood, the views aren't good.

Out back, a tall chainlink fence encloses a huge pile of debris. Off to the side, several acres between the school and Mashapaug Pond are also fenced off and signs warn people to keep out.

The front of the school faces an empty Stop & Shop supermarket and parking lot. Inside the store, crews are drilling through the concrete floor so they can test for contaminants in the soils underneath.

Adelaide assistant principal John O. Craig, supervising students at the end of a recent school day, points to the ductwork designed to pull toxic gases from the soil and direct them away from classrooms. He thinks the school is safe, but barely adequate for his students.

"We're doing the best we can with what we have," says Craig. "But I'd just like to get a ball field and a running track for my students."

The only other place in Rhode Island where a school has been built on contaminated land is just a short way up Route 10, also in Providence. The city built a middle school and an elementary school on a closed landfill off Springfield Street. The School Department continually vents harmful gases and fills places where soils and walks have caved in.

Related links

Investigative reports on the Adelaide Avenue School and the two schools that were built on a dumpsite on Springfield Street

"Environmental Justice" blog, with links to other environmental equity resources

Both projects faced neighborhood opposition and lawsuits, but the city, in a rush to serve a growing student population, built them anyway.

Soon, there may be more organized action to ensure that no community in Rhode Island ever again builds a school on a contaminated site.

A coalition of advocacy groups has incorporated the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island. The coalition plans to raise money and hire staff to protect the interests of the poor and minorities in Rhode Island's cities and to tackle other issues such as dilapidated housing and pollution from traffic.

Two state legislators have also submitted bills that would prevent municipalities from building schools on landfills or Brownfield sites.

Connecticut recently enacted environmental justice legislation that goes even further.

Providence officials insist they have ensured the safety of the city's children. But the city is old with a history of heavy industry, so it's not easy to locate significant tracts of land that don't require some cleanup.

"We don't have a lot of land to work with," says Karen Southern, spokeswoman for Mayor David N. Cicilline. She said the mayor would never build a school on a site that wasn't deemed 100 percent safe by the state Department of Environmental Management. "That's the mayor's number-one priority."

The coalition is being promoted by groups fighting lead poisoning, asthma and toxic pollution. Its supporters range from statewide groups such as the Environment Council of Rhode Island to more urban-focused groups such as the Hartford Park Residents

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Association and the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.

Its goals, according to a mission statement, are to make available more information about pollution sources to neighbors and parents, to have people treated fairly and to give them equal and fair access to a "safe, healthy and sustainable environment at home, at work, at school and in public places."

"Lots of organizations work on environmental justice, but we all operate in our own areas," said one organizer, Liz Colon. She is a leader of CLAP, the Childhood Lead Action Project. "Now we want to bring people together collectively. And we want to get people involved who don't know they are being affected."

Steven Fischbach, a lawyer for Rhode Island Legal Services, said when Providence residents first came to him in 1999 because they were opposed to the city's plans to build schools on the Springfield Street dumpsite, "we felt that environmental problems affecting poor people and people of color weren't getting addressed."

Fischbach said many people he represents in the city don't know whom to call when they need help, and they are used to not getting help from the government.

"It's not like people didn't try, Fischbach said. "They are so used to losing, it's like, why bother. So many people feel like they can't fight city hall."

Fischbach represented the Hartford Park Tenants Association and sued the state DEM, the Providence School Board and Alan Sepe, acting director of Providence's Department of Public Property, to stop the school projects on Springfield Street, which were being constructed by the Cianci administration.

Superior Court Judge Edward C. Clifton found that the DEM properly evaluated the site and took the necessary steps to protect students from toxins in the ground. But he found the agency violated state law by not meeting "environmental equity" (to minorities and the poor) and community involvement requirements.

Clifton found the city failed to properly notify neighboring property owners and allow public participation in the siting process and violated the law by starting site work without DEM approval.

He disagreed with the plaintiff's allegation that siting of the school was based on race.

"While plaintiff's evidence proves that the process was rushed and even sloppily executed, there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that intent to discriminate was the driving force behind defendant's actions," Clifton wrote.

The judge ordered that all documents related to environmental hazards at the schools be made public, that all parents should be notified of environmental hazards in English and Spanish, and that summaries of nurses' logs be made available each month. When future school sites are evaluated, he said, neighbors should be notified.

Several years later, similar issues arose as the city worked to build a new high school on Adelaide Avenue, using some of the 37-acre Gorham Manufacturing Co. site previously owned by Textron. This time, in 2006, the DEM sued the city.

In that case, Judge Daniel A. Procaccini ordered more work evaluating environmental hazards on the site, removal of a pile of hazardous slag and an eight-foot-high chainlink fence to keep people out of areas that remained polluted.

Last summer, the city opened the high school. But a few months later, the YMCA of Greater Providence dropped plans to build a \$10-million facility next door. Delays and neighborhood concerns had driven up the costs, officials said.

Terrence Gray, DEM's assistant director for air, water and compliance, says the DEM learned a lot in the course of the lawsuits.

With the Springfield Street schools, he said the city was moving very fast and the DEM mistakenly tried to work with the city's timeline.

In the end, the DEM made sure the cleanup was done properly, he said, but it didn't do a good job of involving the public.

"Our people tend to be more introverted engineers and scientists. So now we're providing training in environmental justice and public outreach.

'A lot of people didn't know who we were. We also learned we relied too much on the old media. We had to learn to use list serves
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and blogs. We now have a blog on environmental justice, though it doesn't get a lot of viewers."

Still, Gray is concerned about the long-term costs of maintaining the equipment to keep harmful vapors out of the schools. Will future administrations appreciate the importance of maintenance?

Textron says it is committed to resolving further environmental issues at the Gorham site with a goal of turning a large portion of the site into a public park.

That would appear to provide the open space for Adelaide's students to get out and run and play.

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Published: Sunday, Aug. 01, 2010 / Updated: Sunday, Aug. 01, 2010 03:25 PM

Industrial chemicals found in Clover area well water

By Jamie Self - jsself@heraldonline.com

CLOVER --

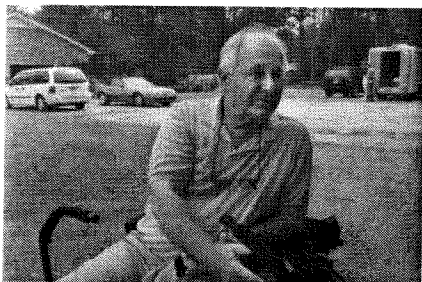
The 75 acres at the edge of Clover where the Miller family has lived since the 1700s has seen nothing but sweet potato and alfalfa crops and a few houses surrounded by woods.

Being so isolated, Judy Miller and her husband Ralph never suspected the chemical smell in their well water came from high concentrations of toxic, industrial chemicals.

In June, the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control tested their well water, finding ten chlorinated solvents commonly used in dry cleaning, degreasers and other industrial cleaners. Four of the solvents exceeded the Environmental Protection Agency's standards for maximum contaminant levels in drinking water and one, tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, was found in concentrations more than 6,000 times what is considered safe for drinking water.

Slideshow

< Prev 1 of 2 photos Next >



"I guess I was so naive to think that someone would dump something so terrible," Judy Miller said.

The Millers have been told to stop using well water. Her sister, who has city water, is allowing them to get water from her garden spigot until they can replace what was a reliable source of water for 40 years.

Fran Marshall, DHEC state toxicologist, recommended the Millers see their physicians. So far, their doctors say, they are healthy. Judy Miller said the water she used for showers may have contributed to irritating her skin and eyes.

Judy Miller said she is thankful they ate out and drank bottled water so often.

"Our preference is to keep our good country water, but I don't know if that's going to happen now," Ralph Miller said.

Chemical odors 10 years old

The discovery comes about a decade after the Millers first noticed a chemical odor when running faucets or drinking well water.

Several years ago, a sample from their 212-foot well was tested. It came back negative. Later the Millers discovered the test checked only for bacteria.

Recently, the water developed a chemical taste. They switched to bottled water for drinking and cooking, but they continued to use well water for showering.

In May, the Millers sought to have the water tested again. This time, the DHEC sent a crew to the Millers' residence.

The results are contamination levels not usually seen in private wells, said Jonathan McInnis, the project manager for the site assessment division of DHEC.

Chlorinated solvents evaporate quickly, McInnis said. The resulting chemical vapor explains the strong chemical smell. Exposure side effects are skin irritation and possible damage to the liver, kidney and lungs if inhaled or ingested. Some of the chemicals might cause cancer.

Looking for the source

Finding the source of the contamination, or exactly when the chemicals were released into the environment, may prove difficult due to the geology of the area.

The farm lies atop bedrock which has many fractures through which water can travel from unknown distances and locations.

McInnis and his team are drilling small wells around the Millers' property to determine the extent of the contamination. They are collecting soil, well water and surface water samples.

They are making a list of nearby private wells to check and will investigate about a dozen former or current businesses nearby as possible sources of the contamination.

It's unclear when DHEC will know where and when the contamination was released into the environment.

"We're in the early stages of our investigation," McInnis said.

For now, the Millers are just glad to have DHEC working on the problem. But the idea that someone could be dumping contaminants on the ground still disturbs Judy Miller.

"This has been an eye-opening, maddening experience," she said, "even if we do squeak by with no health problems."

"Somebody somewhere is pouring something on the ground."

Jamie Self 803-329-4062

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fortmillres wrote on 08/02/2010 01:14:06 PM:

Scary to think this stuff still happens. Hope they find out who is responsible for this mess. Who knows if the chemicals in the water got into the veggies they grew to possibly make a lot more people sick.

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rd wrote on 08/02/2010 10:48:32 AM:

Second, I would have my well checked just in case. Who knows how far that stuff can travel.

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secondamend wrote on 08/02/2010 10:43:05 AM:

rd Thanks that is close but I think I am OK. Hell that could have come from anywhere.

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rd wrote on 08/02/2010 09:36:57 AM:

Second, I am almost sure that it is up 321 past the Eagles' nest, before you get to the trailer park and subdivision.

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secondamend wrote on 08/02/2010 08:31:43 AM:

Does anyone know where this is? The say on the edge of Clover but that does not tell me anything. I live on the north edge of Clover and I want to make sure I am not near this.

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bigbubba wrote on 08/02/2010 04:08:41 AM:

The problem with Clover city water is that is is way too expensive. The city charges much more than I pay here in Rock Hill. This farm is far away from any industrial areas. It is frightening to think that wells could be contaminated by dumping miles and miles away.

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County46_district4_voter wrote on 08/02/2010 00:40:37 AM:

HEY CITY, COUNTY, STATE, & FEDERAL GOVERNMENT - How About, AT LEAST DOING A SIMPLE FREE PUBLIC RECORD CHECK, Before SPENDING TAX PAYER MONEY Hiring a Company Whose OWNER HAS PLED GUILTY TO CRIMINAL CHARGES RELATED TO THE LINE OF WORK HE'S BEING HIRED FOR!!!! HELLO???

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County46_district4_voter wrote on 08/02/2010 00:30:27 AM:

There is a company near me that has been running a 10 acre illegal dump for YEARS, apparently. The owner was charged in 2007 with Causing or permitting Pollution of Environment & Willful violation of Solid Waste Act 1st offense. The Pollution Chrg was DISMISSED & he Pled Guilty to Solid Waste Dumping chrg & got 5 yrs SUSPENDED Upon Completion of 1 yr Probation. Since then according to Rock Hill City's website this Company has

TH CHC

Carcinogen in water

By BETSY BLANEY

Associated Press
Published Sunday, July 12, 2009 12:07 AM

MIDLAND -- Beverly Crouch spent hundreds of dollars on chemicals last fall to try to get the green tinge out of her backyard pool.

All for naught.

It wasn't until two months ago that she learned why the chemicals she put into her 13,000-gallon above-ground pool wouldn't clear the water. The green color came from well water contaminated with hexavalent chromium, a known human carcinogen.

Crouch, 44, isn't alone. Some of her neighbors' wells gushed water the color of urine.

Texas environmental officials are still trying to determine the extent of the contamination. Later this month, they will ask the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to consider the site for federal Superfund status.

After that, efforts will begin to find who dumped the dangerous chemical, which appears to have been in the area for years, according to one environmental investigator.

Residents have enlisted the help of Erin Brockovich, the environmental crusader who helped Hinkley, Calif., residents after their groundwater was found to be contaminated by the same chemical.

"Nobody should be taking the situation lightly," said Brockovich, who came to Midland in June to meet with residents of Cotton Flats, a community south of Interstate 20 on the fringe of Midland. "We can't take back the damage that's been done."

Industrial workers who breathe airborne hexavalent chromium may get lung cancer, and it can irritate or damage the nose, throat and lungs if inhaled at high levels. It can also damage eyes or skin.

People and animals exposed to hexavalent chromium in drinking water face an increased risk of stomach tumors.

As of June 30, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality had found contamination in about one-third of the 125 wells tested in Cotton Flats.

Most of the Cotton Flats homes are in Midland County and are not connected to the city's water supply.

The highest reading was 5,250 parts of chromium per billion -- more than 50 times the maximum allowed by the EPA.

Hexavalent chromium compounds, a toxic form of the element chromium, are man-made and used as anticorrosives and rust inhibitors; in chrome plating; in pressure treating of wood; in dyes and pigments; and in leather tanning.

The state environmental agency continues to test wells; so far, the commission has spent more than \$1 million on testing and dealing with the contamination. Texas law allows the agency to seek reimbursement from polluters for costs associated with dealing with the contamination. Such costs would include filtration systems the commission has installed at homes where levels of hexavalent chromium exceed the EPA maximum.

The systems provide water that is safe for all household uses, agency spokeswoman Andrea Morrow said.

The well tests began in early April, but it is not known how long the chemical has been in the groundwater, Morrow said.

Some think the agency isn't moving quickly enough.

"When there's an emergency like this, it can be perceived that no one is moving fast enough," said Bob Bowcock, an environmental engineer investigating the Midland County contamination alongside Brockovich.

The concentrations of hexavalent chromium are the highest he's ever seen in groundwater, and he believes the chemical has been in the groundwater as long as five years.

The culprit is definitely oil-field activity, Bowcock said, because that's the only industry in the area.

Fourteen-year-old Ashlee Elder experienced the effects in her grandmother's pool while swimming with friends.

"It burns your eyes, and your skin hurts afterward," she said. "I didn't want to get back into it afterward. No one did."

Ashlee's grandmother, Kay Sathre, is the unofficial point person for the community. Her 9-year-old granddaughter had a skin rash for months from swimming regularly in her pool.

"This is what we get for living in the middle of the oil fields," Sathre said.

Bowcock and some Cotton Flats residents believe oil-field services company Schlumberger is responsible. In an e-mailed statement, company spokesman Stephen T. Harris denied that Schlumberger was to blame.

"Schlumberger fully appreciates the concern of the public and continues to cooperate with the TCEQ to help identify sources of chromium in the area," Harris wrote. "Independent groundwater tests, however, indicate that the source of the contamination is likely an adjacent site unrelated to our facility."

Brockovich, who won more than \$300 million for plaintiffs in the California case involving Pacific Gas and Electric, did not rule out a lawsuit in the Midland case, should a culprit be found.

Sheldon Johnson, who has lived in Cotton Flats for 17 years and works for the city of Midland, said he doubted that whoever is responsible would step forward.

Johnson and others frequently check and change the filters inside the system to ensure that they are working properly. The potential health threat is never far from their thoughts.

"We go to bed with it on our minds, we wake up with it on our minds," he said. "All of us worry, 'Is our filtration system working?'"

* Texas Commission on Environmental Quality status page: <http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/remediation/sites/cr112.html>

Contaminated Texas Air Base Blamed for Neighbors' Illnesses

May 8, 2000



By Cat Lazaroff

SAN ANTONIO, Texas, May 8, 2000 (ENS) - Almost 15 years of dumping hazardous chemicals at San Antonio's Kelly Air Force Base has taken its toll on the health of nearby residents and now threatens the city's supply of drinking water, claim documents released this week by an environmental watchdog group.

The Texas chapter of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (Texas PEER) blames plumes of toxic contamination that run beneath more than 20,000 homes in the poorer Hispanic districts surrounding the airbase.



1. From 1940 to 1955, this site held a chemical evaporation pit used as an unlined disposal pit for chromium plating sludge and wastes (Two photos courtesy Kelly AFB)

Located on 4,000 acres and surrounded by residential neighborhoods, Kelly Air Force Base (KAFB) warehouses and maintains aircraft, jet engines and accessory components, including nuclear materials, for worldwide distribution. Activities at the base can generate as much as 282,000 tons of hazardous waste per year, all in close proximity to neighboring communities.

The base, which is scheduled to close in July 2001, has been called the "top priority" cleanup site in Texas by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). To date, the U.S. Air Force has spent about \$150 million to remove contaminated soil, debris and equipment, and construct water treatment facilities to clean up contaminated water running about 20 feet below the ground.

A public health assessment released last year by the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) concluded that contamination from KAFB does not pose a significant health risk. "No one is coming into contact with harmful levels of contamination from Kelly,"

said Dick Walters, a public affairs specialist with Kelly Air Force Base's Environmental Program. "There's nothing reaching people that could make them sick. Its not the Air Force saying that, its the health people."

But problems persist. Walters acknowledges that there are water contamination problems on the base, and that some polluted plumes do extend beneath surrounding neighborhoods.

However, he says those near surface plumes do not pose a danger to anyone. "The shallow underground water stopped being a drinking water source for these people in the 1950s," Walters told ENS. When a drought hit the region, wells dried up, and neighborhoods were hooked into the city of San Antonio's municipal drinking water supply, which comes from the Edwards Aquifer, deep below the known contamination.

II. The Kelly AFB golf course sits atop a former landfill that received construction materials, mixed solvents and drummed wastes

"If something can't touch you, it's not going to harm you," said Walters. "No one is coming into contact with harmful pollutants from Kelly Air Force Base."



But Texas PEER says residents are being affected by the contamination. These plumes of contaminated groundwater extend throughout a shallow aquifer which runs beneath more than 20,000 homes near the base. The aquifer is still used by local residents to water their lawns and gardens, the group found. So while local residents are not drinking directly from the polluted source, they still may face exposure to toxins through domestic and recreational contact or from volatile vapors which may enter their homes from the contaminated plumes below.

In 1997, a health survey by the Southwest Public Workers' Union in the poor, Hispanic neighborhood of North Kelly Gardens found that, "91 percent of the adults and 79 percent of the children are suffering multiple illnesses," ranging from ear, nose and throat conditions to central nervous system disorders.

Yolanda Johnson has lived one block from KAFB in North Kelly Gardens since 1965. She and others in the predominantly Hispanic surrounding communities have been complaining for years about health problems from contamination at the base.



III. Yolanda Johnson has lived near Kelly Air Force Base for 35 years (Two photos courtesy Texas PEER)

Johnson says she remembers watching her children play at the fenceline of KAFB, while a few feet away air force personnel dumped contaminated waste into an open pit in the ground. At the time, Johnson did not know what they were dumping, but she knew it smelled bad and, "when it

would rain, this pit would overflow and it would come into our neighborhood," she told Texas PEER.

"My children started getting sick," Johnson remembered. "I have two children whose legs start bowing, and their arms start bowing. And I kept thinking, 'There must be something wrong here,' because my children were healthy and now their bones were bowing."

Scientists at KAFB released information in 1983 indicating that toxic waste had been dumped into an uncovered pit, much like the one described by Johnson, from 1960 to 1973. The waste contained carcinogens such as benzene, chlorobenzene, perchloroethylene and trichloroethylene and created plumes of contaminated groundwater which still run beneath nearby residential areas.

Armando Quintanilla, another local resident, worked at KAFB from 1945 until his retirement in 1992 and was aware of the many pollutants generated at the base.

IV. Armando Quintanilla worked for Kelly AFB for 47 years

"The trichloroethylene [a solvent used to degrease aircraft parts] was intentionally dumped by the Air Force into the ground, which went into the groundwater and has now gone as far as three miles from the fenceline at KAFB," Quintanilla told Texas PEER.



Now there is growing concern that contaminants from KAFB have migrated deeper into the Edwards Aquifer, the drinking water source for the City of San Antonio.

In June 1999, several groups including the Committee for Environmental Justice Action, a group of residents living near KAFB, the Southwest Public Workers' Union, Resource Center for Community Health and Environmental Justice, and the Texas chapter of the Sierra Club filed a petition with the EPA and Governor George W. Bush to designate Kelly Air Force Base as a federal Superfund site.

Superfund designation allows residents of affected areas to apply for federal grant money to allow them to participate in the government's cleanup decisions, often by hiring their own experts to advise them on cleanup proposals. However, the state of Texas opposed listing KAFB as a federal Superfund site.

Local residents fear that without Superfund designation, the Air Force could leave town next year without completing a cleanup. But Walters says that is simply not the case.



V. This section of Kelly AFB contains former landfills, a fire control training site and a low-level radioactive disposal site
(Photo courtesy Kelly AFB)

"The Air Force is committed to stay until the cleanup is done," he said. Under federal law, the EPA regional administrator, "must certify that all necessary cleanup work has been done" before the property can be turned over to civilian hands. In addition, "if the new owners find anything later, the Air Force is required to come back and clean it up," said Walters.

Texas PEER says current cleanup efforts are haphazard and incomplete, and the Texas Natural Resources Conservation Commission (TNRCC), the state's pollution control agency, has yet to take enforcement action or begin a cleanup at Kelly Air Force Base.

"Kelly is typical of the TNRCC's 'Don't Worry, Be Happy' approach to toxic contamination of poor communities," said Texas PEER coordinator Erin Rogers. "The Air Force can skip town secure in the knowledge that, after years of dithering, Texas is not going to start enforcing pollution laws today."

In a memo circulated within TNRCC in 1995, the agency acknowledged "extensive environmental contamination at the base," and concluded that little had been done to correct the problem, in part because KAFB had "been trying to circumvent the regulatory process for the last six years."

VI. Hundreds of thousands of gallons of jet fuel were spilled at Kelly AFB (Photo courtesy Texas PEER)

Yet in a 1999 report, TNRCC calls Kelly Air Force Base a "cleanup and reuse success story."

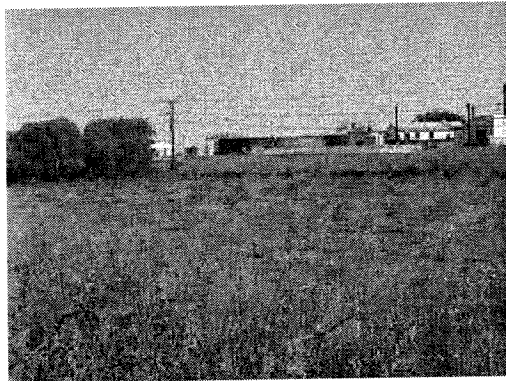


"The cleanup is on schedule with final remedies for a majority of sites to be in place by December 2000," the report reads. "Interim remedies are successfully operating for several groundwater plumes. Redevelopment goals are being met with over 2,000 new jobs already in place."

Citing TNRCC's failure to take enforcement action against the Air Force, its opposition to Superfund listing and a host of other concerns, community groups have filed a federal civil rights complaint alleging discrimination against the Latino community near the base.

As part of their complaint, community members asserted that KAFB, TNRCC, the city of San Antonio, the EPA, and two other organizations "discriminate against Latino residents that live near Kelly AFB in San Antonio, Texas by ignoring their environmental protection and public health needs." The citizens cited numerous examples of "institutional racism" related to contamination at KAFB, including exclusion of community members from decision making meetings related to the closure and cleanup of KAFB.

The groups also cited the withholding of information from the public regarding the nature and extent of contamination, including failure to inform potential home buyers of federally subsidized property about the environmental condition of the property.



VII. The groundwater beneath this site contains vinyl chloride, benzene, chlorobenzene, pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, toxic metals and other pollutants (Photo courtesy Kelly AFB)

Walters, the KAFB public affairs specialist, says the general public and the surrounding community have been well informed about contamination sources and cleanup efforts on the base. Both Yolanda Johnson and Armando Quintanilla, who gave interviews for the Texas PEER report, have been members of Kelly Air Force

Base's Restoration Advisory Board since November 1994.

While the environmental justice case is pending, local residents continue to live each day in their contaminated neighborhoods, and new families continue to move in, lured by the prospect of affordable housing but unaware of the risks, Texas PEER says.

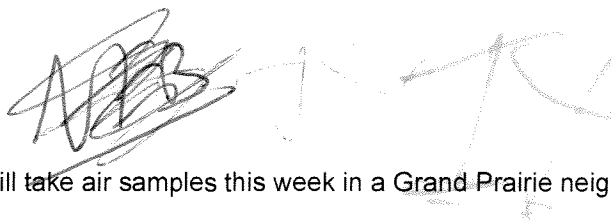
"That's what concerns me," said Yolanda Johnson. "We have a lot of young marriages here. A lot of young children moving in because it's affordable housing. And they move in and they don't know that eventually they'll be sick like we are. And I think that's a very sad thing to happen."

Schnapf, Lawrence

From: Schnapf, Lawrence

Sent: Tuesday, May 20, 2008 3:20 PM

To: LSchnapf@aol.com



Environmental Protection Agency representatives will take air samples this week in a Grand Prairie neighborhood sitting above groundwater contaminated with a noxious liquid.

The agency will study the potential vapor intrusion into homes of trichloroethylene, or TCE, a carcinogenic liquid used to clean grease off metal. The homes are near the former Delfasco Forge site at 114 N.E. 28th St.

"We want to make sure it's not coming up through the soil and getting into living spaces," said Rick Ehrhart, an EPA corrective action coordinator.

EPA officials said there wasn't an immediate need to test the site, but they wanted to gather more data.

Tests show TCE used at the site has seeped into the groundwater. The groundwater plume is 1,100 feet wide and 2,650 feet long, submerged under an area spanning more than 65 acres and sitting under about 100 homes.

Delfasco Forge, a contract metal fabrication and forging manufacturer, operated at the site from 1981 until 1998. The company now leases the property to an automotive repair business.

Philip Kadlecek, president of Delfasco Inc., told the Grand Prairie City Council in November that he didn't know when contamination occurred but said he believed it was before Delfasco owned the property.

According to documents released by the Grand Prairie environmental services department, the concentrations of TCE in the plume and soil have been shown to be above the residential limits set by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. It is not known, however, whether residents have been exposed to levels of TCE that would cause health problems.

TCE has been known to affect the nervous system and damage the liver and lungs, according to the Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. In people exposed to high levels in drinking water or air over long periods, TCE is considered a likely carcinogenic.

The area's contamination has been a concern among property owners.

A civil liability lawsuit filed in June 2006 by 22 property owners in district court in Dallas claims that Delfasco knowingly used TCE even though it was poisonous. Plaintiffs seek recovery of loss of market value to the property and the costs of remediation.

That case was originally scheduled to be heard this spring, but no hearings have been set and no other information was available. Calls to the plaintiff's attorney were not returned.

According to the initial filing, "Plaintiffs are now concerned about continuing to live with their families on land connected to an underground lake of poisoned water."

According to the filing, Delfasco denies the allegations.

The EPA recently held a public meeting to recruit 20 property owners to take part in the vapor study. The sampling will last a week. It usually takes about two months to get results back, Mr. Ehrhart said.

The process to test the air underneath homes is simple and not intrusive, Mr. Ehrhart said. Most of the homes sit on pier-and-beam foundations. Canisters will be placed under the homes between the ground and floor for 24 hours. They will then be sent off for testing.

Another public meeting will be called to share that information with residents when the data is available.

Mr. Ehrhart said that if vapors are found, steps can be taken to purify the air.

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POWERED BY YOU AND THE

PCE leaves a toxic legacy

Fumes concern property owners

BY SAM HEMINGWAY • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • JUNE 7, 2009

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Few Burlingtonians may remember Park Cleaners, a dry-cleaning business run out of the old Blinn House on 151 South Champlain St. in 1958.

The business lasted only one year at the site, but its brief time there was long enough to create a troublesome underground chemical contamination plume that today stretches from the aging, paint-chipped building almost to the shores of Lake Champlain.

The culprit: tetrachloroethylene, or PCE for short, a chemical widely used by dry cleaners and apparently discharged into the soil by Park Cleaners' employees. The chemical can cause headaches and dizziness in the short term and, potentially, cancer later on.

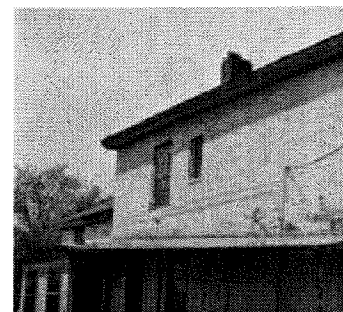
State environmental officials say the underground PCE poses little threat to the lake's water quality because the lake's water mass would quickly dilute the PCE to harmless levels if and when the PCE reaches the lake.

It's the fumes emanating from the underground contamination that has state environmental officials concerned.

Based on readings from more than 100 miniature monitoring wells in the area, those fumes are now seeping up into a row of buildings a block away on Battery Street.

Last week, workers began installing venting systems in three of the buildings as part of a state-approved mitigation plan. The Blinn House, now empty, and one next door to it will also need venting systems, too, if they are ever renovated, as will any structures that replace them.

"Prior to any occupancy, they need to have a system installed on the property," said Hugo Martinez Cazon, an environmental analyst with the state Environmental Conservation Department's Solid Waste Division.



The Blinn House at 151 S. Champ former site of Park Cleaners, which tetrachloroethylene — or PCE — in operation in 1958. The polluted site state.

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Cazon said that so far, those are the only buildings requiring installation of the venting systems, but he's not sure what the future will bring.

"There could turn out to be remediation need in other buildings," Cazon said.

Burlington PCE Flume

27,000 nationally.

The case of Park Cleaners is one of 19 involving PCE groundwater contamination by former dry cleaners around the state and an estimated

In another Vermont case, one involving neighbors to a defunct dry cleaner business in White River Junction, the state came under fire for not keeping nearby residents advised about potential for PCE fumes in their homes.

That was not an issue in the Burlington case, but the road to remedying the situation has similarly been full of twists and turns.

The initial discovery of the PCE problem in Burlington was made in 2002, when the Blinn House was owned by Clark Hinsdale Jr. Part of the building was being rented out to residential tenants and part to an auto repair business.

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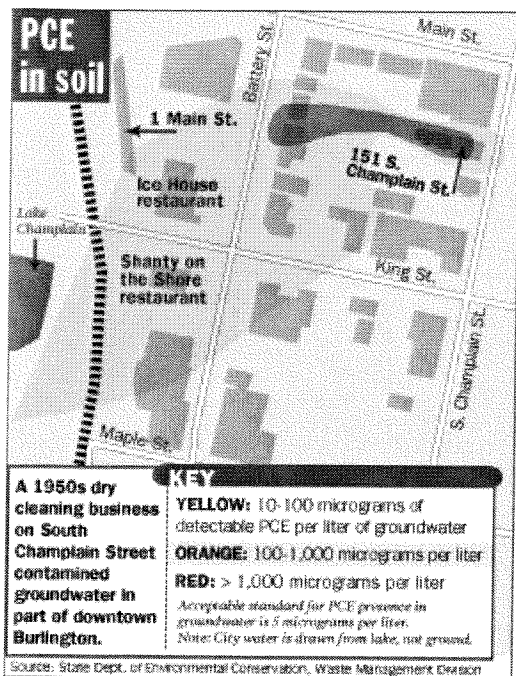
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At the time, the King Street Neighborhood Redevelopment Corp., wanted to buy the site from Hinsdale, demolish it and build a low- and moderate-income structure in its place as part of the city's effort to redevelop the waterfront area of the city.

"Our plan was to convert a blighted property into an asset in the neighborhood," said Brian Pine of the city's Community and Economic Development Office.

Pine said a deal to sell the site to the city for \$340,000 fell apart when the PCE problem was discovered and the King Street entity asked Hinsdale to reduce his price to reflect the additional costs it would be taking once it owned the property.

"He was not willing to cut the price to pay for the cleanup," Pine said. "The place had an environmental cloud hanging over it."

Hinsdale was still the owner of the property when he died in 2008. Attorney Stuart Bennett, the executor of Hinsdale's estate, said the estate hopes to dispose of the property at some point later this year.

Although the 2003 sale was stalled, the investigation into the extent of the PCE problem continued, funded by federal grants. In one apartment inside the old dry cleaning structure, PCE concentrations were found to be 130 times above accepted levels.

"The indoor air of the basement apartment in the Blinn House was sampled in October 2003," a revised corrective plan for 151 South Champlain St. said. "The tenant was subsequently moved from the apartment. The apartment remains unoccupied."

Determining the extent of the underground PCE plume took more time.

The investigation eventually found what Cazon called a "fried egg" shaped plume, with the heaviest concentrations near 151 South Champlain St. and touching portions of the east side of Battery Street, and the less serious portions spreading out west of Battery Street under the Ice House and Shanty on the Shore restaurants.

"The dissolved PCE plume was defined as far west as 100 feet from Lake Champlain," the plan said. "Indoor air samples were collected from 13 down gradient buildings ... PCE concentrations above the (accepted level) were observed in all of the buildings located directly above the dissolved phase plume."

The venting systems now being installed at the Battery Street properties, based on the findings of the monitoring wells in the area, are being paid for by the Hinsdale estate under an agreement reached with the state and the buildings' owners last year.

Pine said he's hopeful that someday soon, the city will be able to reach agreement to finally buy the old Blinn House site and move ahead with the plans to build a housing project in its place.

"There's been a bunch of pieces floating around this project and we are trying to find them all," he said.

"We're getting closer than we have been before. At least everyone is at the table."

The one hitch in the proceedings could be a set of claims filed with the probate court in Burlington last year by several owners of nearby properties with PCE air contamination concerns.



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Exxon Discovers Gas Contamination

Officials say levels extremely low, but action still may be taken.

By Mike DiCicco
Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Great Falls resident Robb Watters said he was distraught to learn from a neighbor, rather than official sources, that the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) was testing wells in his neighborhood off Innsbruck Avenue for possible gasoline contamination.

After the nearby Exxon station found traces of gasoline constituents on its property, Exxon and the DEQ "decided to quietly start testing neighborhoods" in the surrounding area, Watters said. And when his wife called the DEQ, he said, "She was told, 'You need to make an adult decision on whether to drink your water.'"

However, he said he had been in contact with Supervisor John Foust's (D-Dranesville) office and found Foust to be "amazingly responsive on this issue."

"The critical point is that it's not deemed by DEQ scientists to be a serious health risk, but it is deemed unacceptable to have this contaminant in your well," Foust said. While levels of contamination that were found in groundwater and a few wells are far below those that would mandate action in a public water system, he said, the state has a zero-tolerance policy for contamination of well water. As testing continues, Foust said, there could be several options for dealing with the problem.

He added that it had not been confirmed that the Exxon station was the source of contamination.

KURT KOCHAN, who is handling the case for the DEQ, said the Health Department's advisory level for methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE), the gasoline constituent that Exxon had discovered, was 20 parts per billion. "The levels that have been reported to us are about 40 times below those advisory levels," he said, noting that the amounts detected were all estimates because they were about as low a value as the technology could register.

Kochan said Exxon was still testing under his department's direction to confirm the presence of MTBE and determine whether there was an ongoing leak. However, he said, "Our program opinion is that we don't want anybody to be exposed to any level of these constituents."

He said the source of the contamination remained unclear, as there is a Shell gas station across the street from the Exxon and levels were low enough that the pollution could simply be the result of automobile use.

An official statement from ExxonMobile said the station had tested its own equipment and found no leaks.

In late August, Exxon started testing its property in preparation for selling the station, Foust said. On Aug. 26, the company reported to the DEQ that contamination had been found, and his office was notified the next day. The following day, he convened a meeting with the DEQ and local officials. "At that meeting, it was made clear by the DEQ that they did not consider this a health risk," he said.

Nonetheless, Exxon identified 38 homes within half a mile of the station and asked those homeowners for permission to test their wells. The company ended up testing 16 wells, according to its public statement.

Four wells tested positive for MTBE and one for Perchloroethylene (PCE), a chemical used in dry cleaning, Kochan said.

In the 1990s, PCE contamination was found in a number of Great Falls wells, resulting in many homes getting hooked up to public water. Most homes south of Georgetown Pike receive public water, as do the shopping centers near the gas station, the Village Green Day School, the library and the elementary school.

The DEQ hired a contractor to re-test four of the wells where contamination had been found, as arrangements could not be made to re-test the fifth, an unoccupied property, Kochan said. One well tested positive for PCE, but no gasoline was detected in any of the four wells.

Kochan said his program, funded through a special gas tax, was only authorized to deal with gasoline pollution.

ONCE more data is collected, Kochan said, the next step could be a public meeting between the DEQ, residents and local officials. In the meantime, Exxon is providing bottled water to the homes where contamination was found, and the DEQ has been distributing fact sheets in the neighborhoods where tests are being conducted.

Where wells are determined to be contaminated, one option would be for the state to provide homeowners with water filters, Foust said. Another would be the provision of new wells, although he said public water connections would be the more likely solution. The final decision would rest with the DEQ, he said.

Thursday, September 17, 2009 (EST)



Photo by Mike DiCicco

The Exxon station near Village Centre has detected traces of gasoline contamination on its property and in some nearby wells.

Still Have Questions?

Residents with questions or concerns are asked to call Kurt Kochan at the Department of Environmental Quality at 703-583-3825.

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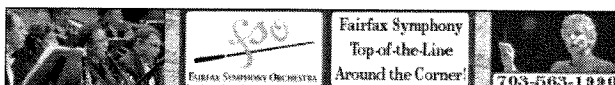
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210 South St. test results expected soon

NEAL P. GOSWAMI, Staff Writer

Posted: 02/13/2009 03:00:22 AM EST

Friday, February 13 BENNINGTON — Environmental test results at 210 South Street, a building being considered to house state offices, could be available in about one month, according to the property owner.

William Colvin, vice president of Applejack Real Estate, which owns the downtown building, said Thursday that plans for a system to mitigate contamination at the building will likely be submitted to the state Agency of Natural Resources today.

An environmental assessment of 210 South St., which once served as an automotive garage and housed manufacturing operations, was carried out by the state and indicated contamination from trichloroethylene, or TCE.

The chemical is a solvent once used in many manufacturing processes. TCE was found in groundwater in the area at low levels in the 1990s, and air testing inside the building by a private firm hired by Applejack confirmed the presence of TCE, according to George Desch, manager of the Hazardous Sites Program for the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Applejack has been working with ANR to develop a mitigation plan, according to Desch, known as "sub-slab depressurization," which will essentially vacuum soil vapors that may have been seeping into the building. The idea has been approved by ANR, and state officials have been expecting a final plan

"any day now," he said.

Sen. John Campbell, D-Windor, a member of the Senate Institutions Committee, suggested last week that progress was being slowed because Applejack was not being "cooperative" with ANR. Desch said Thursday that Applejack was "absolutely" helping move the process.

"I have no reason to believe that that's the case. They have been very cooperative with us," Desch said.

Colvin said Applejack is "prepared to do the installation as soon as (ANR) signs off" on its final mitigation plan. Installation of the mitigation system would be completed within two weeks of approval, and test results would be available within two weeks of the installation, Colvin said.

"That's what we're pushing for. We have contractors lined up ready to go once we get the approval from ANR," he said. "It's never as quick as you'd like, but I'm certainly comfortable that we're moving in the right direction."

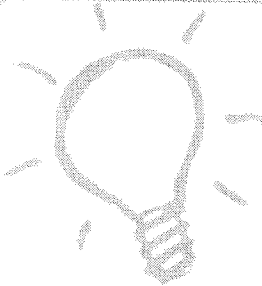
The system will not entirely eliminate the TCE contamination, according to Desch.

"It is a mitigation system, so it is not intended to actually treat what the source is," he said.

Test results will be reviewed by ANR and will help state officials and lawmakers determine if state employees will be relocated downtown. Employees were pulled out of the local state office complex on Veterans Memorial Drive in 2007 because of health concerns.

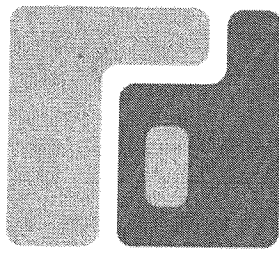
The state learned in June 2006 that at least six past and present employees had developed the rare disease sarcoidosis. Many other employees had

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complained of asthma and other respiratory ailments. Workers are now in modular offices on the grounds of the state complex.

The state House and Senate Institutions Committee are hoping testing done at 210 South St. after the mitigation system is in place will help them determine if the building is safe to house employees. Sen. Philip Scott, R-Washington, chairman of the Senate Committee, said the results are needed before the committee can make a decision that will best benefit state employees.

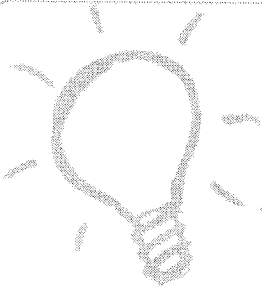
"They understand our hesitance on moving forward until we get all of the information," Scott said. "I think we've gauged them almost on a daily basis. They have pretty good representation in the statehouse and they're not shy about communicating what their feelings are."

Rep. Cynthia Browning, D-Arlington, said the House Institutions Committee she serves on also is waiting for the test results before coming to any conclusions.

"If that site really comes up clean, I think its a really good option," she said. "But there are really big ifs associated with it, and I feel very uncomfortable with any sites that have questions."

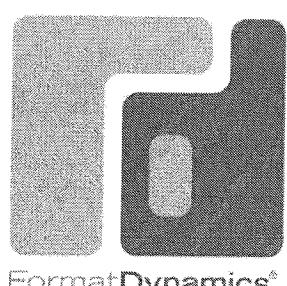
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Chemical specter haunts site

Written By Leon Thompson

Wednesday, January 14, 2009

Impact on workers, plant use uncertain

ST. ALBANS CITY -- A state health department official said here Monday night that it is "reasonable to conclude" past workers of the now-vacant Fonda/Solo paper products plant had some risk of exposure to chemical contaminants.

During a poorly attended, 45-minute hearing held to discuss the now vacant Lower Newton Street property, which the City of St. Albans purchased for development, Mayor Marty Manahan asked the question he said everyone wants to ask: What about the people who worked at the plant just a few short years ago?

As experts attempt to determine the levels of contamination at the site, alternatives to plans for residential use have surfaced, including a new manufacturer, incubator space for businesses, and a value-added ag-product venture that might include the New England Culinary Institute.

Uncertainty about the future use of the site revolves around environmental tests performed as part of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's (NRPC) brownfields program. Tests conducted thus far have revealed contaminants in groundwater, soil and concrete in the main building.

Workers from the Johnson Company, which is conducting tests at the site, have been encouraged to wear protective coverings on their shoes if they are walking inside the plant, according to Rhonda Kay, environmental engineer for Johnson.

Specifically, the site has elevated levels of PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and TCE (trichloroethylene). Kay has said petroleum-based products were used at Fonda/Solo, at one point.

The manufacture of PCBs was stopped in the U.S. in 1977 because of evidence they accumulate in the environment and can cause harmful effects.

According to the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, trichloroethylene is a colorless liquid that is used as a solvent for cleaning metal parts. Drinking or breathing high levels of trichloroethylene may cause nervous system effects, liver and lung damage, abnormal heartbeat, coma, and possibly death.

The U.S. Government has set workplace standards for human exposure to the compound.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the ink used at Fonda, a leading U.S. food container company, contained PCBs, potentially toxic environmental compounds, and was spilled on the concrete floor, leaving it contaminated.

"They've been showing up a lot in a lot of the properties we've been working in," Kay said of PCBs.

Razelle Hoffman-Contois, a public risk health assessor for the Vermont Health Department, addressed Manahan's burning question with a simple yet complex answer: There is no answer.

Hoffman-Contois said all the potential variables involved – such as the types of substances and the various scenarios of exposure to them – make it tough to trace diseases or disorders to chemical exposure at Fonda/Solo.

"I know that's not the answer we all want to hear," Hoffman-Contois said. "I really don't have a good way of reconstructing what happened in the past, unfortunately."

The Solo Cup Company closed the former Fonda Container plant in late 2005, displacing all 168 employees. The paper-products company was among the oldest and continuously run commercial operations in the city. Among its many products were cups and plates once used at large sports ballparks and stadiums.

The city purchased the property for \$300,000 and is working with Yandow-Dousevicz, a South Burlington developer, to build a 100-unit senior housing complex a Solo. Yandow-Dousevicz is also responsible for Hawk's Nest, a senior residential facility in St. Albans Town, at the intersection of Route 104 and Route 36.

"The most important next step is we're going to try and clean it up," said Dominic Cloud, city manager.

The city and Yandow-Dousevicz reached a tentative agreement – signed two years ago – that allowed the city to hand the housing project to the developer after a relatively short time, and minimal investment.

The timeframe, however, has lengthened, and the price tag has risen, in light of the environmental issues. Cloud has said environmental mitigation could cost anywhere from \$900,000 to \$1.5 million. Kay said Monday it could cost \$50,000 to \$100,000 just to deal with the TCE.

The city has submitted a grant application to the EPA for a total of \$400,000 for cleanup at Solo. The city has subdivided the property into two parcels and, with approval, will split the EPA grant between the two sites.

The city will not know until May or June whether it will receive the funds. If the EPA accepts one \$200,000 application from the city, it will accept the other. If one is rejected, they are both rejected.

With approval, the city would not receive those funds until October 2009, the beginning of the federal government's fiscal year.

The city will try to hammer out its official agreement with Yandow-Dousevicz while it waits to hear about that grant status.

"Any idea we pursue must fuel the economy and fuel our grand list," Cloud said, speaking of possible non-residential uses for the site.

The city would not be liable for future environmental issues at the site if the state signs off on the clean-up plan, once it is satisfied, according to Jane Kiser, city development director.

The NRPC is using Environmental Protection Agency funds for its brownfields program. To date, about \$100,000 from that coffer has been spent on the Fonda/Solo plant, according to Catherine Dimitruk, NRPC executive director.

The Johnson Company must next develop a testing plan to see how far the TCE migrated off-site, Kay said.

The NRPC scheduled this week's public forum as an opportunity for the public to hear more about the project and environmental work at the site. About 14 people attended the session at city hall – and only one was not a stakeholder in the project.

"I'm disappointed that more people aren't here," Dimitruk said, "but this is one in a series of ways for people to learn about this site."

Manahan said the turnout also frustrated him, but he explained that the Fonda/Solo building



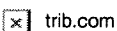
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Officials say drinking water not affected

Contamination remains in north, downtown Casper

By PETE NICKEAS - Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Monday, February 22, 2010 12:15 am

Most of the contaminated groundwater and soil that environment officials found in north and downtown Casper in the mid 1990s is still contaminated, according to testing results released Thursday night by the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality.

The testing was done this fall and revealed widespread groundwater and soil contamination from perchloroethylene, a chemical common to dry cleaning solvents and industrial degreasing chemicals.

Some of the contamination downtown is beneath the old Lobell Refinery site. The north Casper site of a former city garage, now a park, is also contaminated, though DEQ officials couldn't say whether the city's maintenance garage contributed to the contamination. DEQ officials said an old dry cleaning facility in north Casper may have contributed to the contamination, as well.

Drinking water in the areas is provided by the city and first filtered through the water plant near Fort Caspar. The main threat the contamination presents is from "vapor intrusion," according to David Folkes, principal of EnviroGroup, the company that tested water and soil throughout Casper.

High levels of the chemical can cause dizziness, headaches, sleepiness, nausea, and loss of coordination, according to documents provided by the DEQ, though officials said they didn't anticipate any clinical health effects from the level of contamination found throughout Casper.

The chemical dissolves in air, so seepage from ground water into the soil means the chemical eventually leaves the ground and dissipates into the air. The problems begin when the chemical dissipates into confined spaces -- basements and utility closets, for example.

"Perchloroethylene as a liquid is heavier than water and as it sinks into the ground from a leak, it can go from the [ground] water table down until it hits bedrock," Folkes said. "We're most interested in what's in the top of the water because that's where the vapor occurs."

Rick and Lucy Garrison, who live in the contaminated area, said they were going to take advantage of free testing and a possible fix offered by the DEQ.

"The thing that worries you is the resale value of your home," Rick Garrison said.

Both Garrisons said the DEQ has been helpful -- they've received letters outlining the testing efforts, watched the presentation given by DEQ officials and stuck around afterward to talk with the program director.

"It made it really clear for us," Lucy Garrison said.

The most common remediation systems work like souped-up shop vacuums. A contractor drills through a concrete basement floor, digs a small pit and sticks a pipe in the ground to create a "path-of-least-resistance" for the gasses that naturally seep upwards.

A fan sucks the contaminated air that would have seeped into the basement and pushes it through a pipe that exits the building, usually at the roof.

"We're trying to create a vacuum under the floor so the gas under the building wants to go into our fan instead of into the room," Folkes said.

This round of testing was done following the passage of the Orphan Site Remediation Act in 2000 that requires the DEQ to inventory contamination sites where the source of contamination is unknown.

Testing in the mid 1990s found contamination but officials said there wasn't any money for remediation. The DEQ still doesn't know the source of contamination.

Reach city reporter Pete Nickeas at pete.nickeas@trib.com or (307) 266-0639. Read more about Casper politics and government at <http://tribtown.trib.com/redtape>

Perchloroethylene contamination

Areas of North Casper and downtown contaminated with perchloroethylene, a chemical common to dry cleaning solvents and industrial degreasing chemicals, are shown on this map of the city. The state Department of Environmental Quality has been monitoring the sites and is offering assistance to property owners in the affected areas.

WZ

