



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

March 15, 2007

Reply to
Attn Of: ECL-112

Re: Properties Affected by the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund Site

In sending you this letter, EPA is assuming that you are the current property owner. If this is not the case, please contact Jeanne O'Dell, EPA Community Relations Coordinator at (206) 553-6919 as soon as possible so that we can contact the appropriate person. You may also reach Ms. O'Dell by calling toll free at 1-800-424-4EPA.

Dear Property Owner:

This letter concerns properties affected by contamination from the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund site, which is located south of Tacoma, Washington. The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is sending a letter to property owners in the area as a follow-up to letters that EPA sent in 1988 and 1997. In those letters, EPA advised against the use of existing private drinking water wells or drilling new wells in the area affected by contamination from the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund site. **The area of groundwater contamination is identified within the heavy lines on the enclosed map.**

If you live within the heavy outlined area on the map, EPA recommends the continued suspension of using private wells or drilling in the designated area until the cleanup of the groundwater contamination is complete. The contaminated groundwater presents no risk of exposure or adverse health effects to anyone unless existing private wells are used or new wells are installed and used within that area. EPA is not concerned about the use or drilling of private wells outside the outlined area on the enclosed map.

In addition, the local public drinking water supply is safe for drinking purposes and household use. Although the Lakewood Water District draws water from the contaminated area, this water is continuously treated by a process called air stripping. The levels of substances in the treated water are well below the levels established as safe by EPA and the Washington Department of Ecology.

We have enclosed a brief history of the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund site for your information. Please feel free to direct questions about the site to EPA by contacting Monica Tonel of my staff at (206) 553-0323 or call toll free at 1-800-424-4EPA.

Additional Information

The remainder of this letter discusses the contamination and the use and drilling of private wells in more detail.

Groundwater Contamination and Safety of Residents

The chemicals of concern in the Lakewood area groundwater are dichloroethylene (cis-1,2 DCE), trichloroethylene (TCE), and tetrachloroethylene (PERC). All three chemicals are central nervous system depressants. PERC has been associated with liver damage, and TCE has been associated with irregular heartbeat. Although the likelihood of both PERC and TCE causing human cancer is currently being reviewed, there is sufficient evidence from animal studies for EPA to consider both chemicals animal carcinogens (cancer-producing agents), and therefore, suspected human carcinogens.

The existence of the contaminated groundwater within the area outlined on the enclosed map does not currently put you at risk of exposure, particularly since a significant amount of it is pumped to the Lakewood Water District production wells where it is treated before release to the public for use. In the area of concern, the groundwater ranges from forty to fifty feet below ground surface, under a semi-permeable soil layer. Contaminants will not reach the surface or enter surface water by natural processes. There is also no risk of contact with chemical vapors from the contaminated groundwater below your property.

Use and Drilling of Private Wells

You may risk exposure to contamination if you use an existing well or install and use water from a new well. While the chemicals in the treated public drinking water supply are well within safe levels, untreated water still contains concentrations of PERC, DCE, and TCE considered unsafe for public use. The untreated water is also considered unacceptable for bathing, because dermal exposure may present a health risk.

In addition, private well use or drilling could subject you to financial liability under the federal Superfund law. Use of the contaminated water would constitute a release of hazardous substances into the environment, whereby you could be liable for all costs incurred by EPA for cleaning up the releases of the hazardous substances.

In the event that you sell or otherwise transfer ownership of your property, EPA and Ecology advise you to consult a private attorney regarding your obligation to notify prospective purchasers of the groundwater contamination underlying your property and of the risks associated with well drilling and use.

Evaluating the Cleanup

When contamination remains at a Superfund site at levels that restrict exposure or use, EPA is required to evaluate the cleanup at least once every five years after it begins. In September

of 2002, the third "five-year review" of the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund site indicated that use and drilling of private wells remains inadvisable in much of the area identified previously. In the event that EPA determines that these activities are again acceptable, residents will be notified.

If you have any questions or have new information about this site, please contact Monica Tonel of my staff at (206) 553-0323.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sylvia Kawabata, Unit Manager
Assessment and Brownfields Unit #1

Enclosures



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**History of the Lakewood/Ponders Corners Superfund Site
Tacoma, Washington
March 2007**

Background

In July 1981, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sampled drinking water wells in the Tacoma area for volatile organic compounds and found trichlorethylene (TCE), tetrachloroethylene (PERC), and dichloroethylene (cis-1,2 DCE) in two Lakewood Water District production wells. The source of the contamination was determined to be Plaza Cleaners, a dry cleaning and laundry business that disposed of waste solvents on site.

In August 1981, contaminated soil was excavated and removed from the Plaza Cleaners property and the two contaminated Lakewood Water District wells were taken out of service. EPA added the Lakewood/Ponders site to the National Priorities List in 1982. Under a 1983 agreement with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology), Plaza Cleaners revised their solvent-handling practices.

Groundwater Cleanup

In 1984, EPA and Ecology installed two air stripping towers to treat the water from the Lakewood Water District wells. These towers remove and treat the contamination, and the clean water is discharged for use by the public. The Lakewood Water District will continue to operate the groundwater treatment system until the groundwater cleanup goals are met.

Concentrations of volatile organic compounds in the contaminated groundwater plume are decreasing. The concentration of PERC in the most contaminated monitoring well has decreased from 4,856 parts per billion (ppb) to 120 ppb. TCE in the same monitoring well decreased from 103 to 2.3 ppb in the same time period.

Soil Cleanup

Soils on the Plaza Cleaners property were contaminated with the solvent PERC, which was used by the business in their dry cleaning process. In 1987, soils were excavated from three bottomless septic tanks. A soil vapor extraction system was installed and operated from 1988 through 1989 to remove PERC from soils within the septic tanks and the drain field on the property. In 1992, contaminated sludge remaining in and around one septic tank was removed to complete the soil cleanup.

In September 1992, EPA issued a Preliminary Close Out report for the Lakewood/Ponders Corner Superfund site to document the completion of all construction activities at the site.

Copies of the above mentioned reports are available upon request to the EPA. You may direct questions about the site to EPA by contacting Monica Tonel at (206) 553-0323, or toll free at 1-800-424-4372.