

Green Hills East Area Well Surveys and Sampling



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Western Region Environmental Cleanup Program

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Background

This fact sheet provides information about groundwater contamination identified by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in a limited area of Green Hills East, and is intended for property owners who may use well water within the study area.

Some wells in Green Hills East southeast of Salem are contaminated with chlorinated solvents. The cause and extent of the contamination has not yet been determined.

The current study area is roughly bound by Lipscomb Street SE to the north, Hideaway Lane to the south, Witzer-Turner Road to the east, and 55th Ct SE to the west.



Approximate boundaries of the Green Hills East Groundwater Contamination Study Area

How bad is the problem?

Some wells in the study area can have contamination levels that could pose a health hazard if the water is used for typical household uses like drinking, cooking, washing dishes and bathing. Using well water for irrigation is less of a concern because people are not drinking or showering in the water.

What chemicals have been found?

Six chemicals, generally classified as chlorinated solvents, have been found in some of the drinking water wells. The chemicals include cis-1,2-dichloroethene, trans-1,2-dichloroethene, 1,1,2-trichloroethane, trichloroethene, tetrachloroethene, and 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane.

The levels found varied from non-detect to 496 parts per billion or micrograms per liter.

Groundwater use surveys

DEQ is conducting well surveys and sampling within the area to determine if drinking water wells area affected. Once we identify properties that may be using well water, we attempt to make contact by mail and in some cases in person to confirm whether or not a well is in use. If one is, DEQ or our contractor will collect a sample for testing with the owner's permission. Usually wells used only for irrigation are not sampled.

Free well water sampling and testing

If the owner agrees, DEQ or a contractor will make arrangements to visit the property and collect a well water sample. This is usually done at an outside tap. The process takes between 10 and 20 minutes. The sampling generally requires running the water for about 10 minutes before collecting samples. DEQ or the contractor will then send the samples to a laboratory for testing. This test is not like those done for property transactions. Those tests do not test for the chemicals that have been found in the drinking water wells in the area. There is no cost to the owner.



DEQ staff collecting a water sample.

What if contamination is detected?

Once DEQ receives the results of the testing we share the results with the owners. If contamination is detected we will discuss the concentrations and explain if they exceed any applicable health-based standards. If they do, DEQ may suggest measures to reduce exposure to the contaminated water.

What measures can be taken if contamination levels are high?

In some cases the levels of contamination are high enough that DEQ is recommending installing filters to remove the contamination. Depending on the level of contamination, DEQ may be able to pay for filtration or bottled water. DEQ's ability to provide these measures is dependent on our funding, which fluctuates from year to year.

Why is it important?

Identifying contaminated wells is important to protect human health, for current and future owners. Each property owner should be aware of the risks of using contaminated well water. If owners are not informed, they can unknowingly expose themselves and their families to unsafe levels of contamination. This is a situation DEQ is trying to avoid in the future.

What if I have a well and DEQ has not contacted me?

You can call or email DEQ and inform us that you may have a well inside the study area. DEQ usually confirms the location of the property in relation to the area of known contamination. If it is in the contaminated area, DEQ can arrange to collect a sample with your permission.

For more information please contact:

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Alternative formats

Alternative formats of this fact sheet can be made available. For more information call 503-229-5696 or call toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696. Hearing-impaired persons may call 711.