State of Connecticut

Health Information on Hazardous Waste Sites

DURHAM MEADOWS

The Durham Meadows site is one of fifteen Superfund hazardous waste sites in Connecticut. The Connecticut Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, is investigating the possibility that contamination at this site might result in adverse human health effects in the neighboring community. If you have specific concerns about the health implications of this site, please write or call Jennifer Kertanis or Kenny Foscue at the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Epidemiology and Occupational Health (EEOH), 410 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT 06134-0308, (860) 509-7742. For more information about clean-up activities, please contact the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at the address and phone number on this fact sheet.

Site Background

Durham Meadows is a federal National Priorities List (NPL) Superfund Site located in Durham, Connecticut. In 1982, groundwater contamination was identified by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP.) Currently, two manufacturing facilities have been linked to the groundwater contamination: 1) Merriam Manufacturing Company, 281 Main Street and 2) Durham Manufacturing Company, 201 Main Street. The Merriam Manufacturing Company produces metal boxes and has operated since 1851. The Durham Manufacturing Company also produces metal boxes and has operated since 1922.

In 1989, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry issued a Preliminary Health Assessment for the Durham Meadows site. This Assessment concluded that exposure to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in groundwater used for domestic purposes was a public health concern. Recently, a Health Consultation was conducted by the CT Dept of Public Health (CTDPH) to determine if ongoing well monitoring and treatment are preventing exposure to contaminated groundwater. This fact sheet summarizes the findings of this consultation.

Contamination

Groundwater was contaminated by the disposal of paint and degreasing wastes into lagoons and sludge drying beds, and the general operations and waste storage practices of these two facilities. Since the groundwater contamination was identified in 1982, private well treatment and monitoring programs have been put in place. At first, bottled water was provided to the homes where contamination was detected above state action levels. Eventually, contaminated wells were provided with granular activated carbon (GAC) filters. Ten wells received a single GAC unit and 22 wells received two GAC units. Six wells received no filters but were monitored.

In the fall of 1994, a review of monitoring data revealed that residents at seven of the ten homes with single GAC units were exposed to trichloroethylene (TCE) when breakthrough occurred. Breakthrough occurs when the filtering material becomes saturated and contamination is allowed through. The filters were replaced soon after breakthrough. However, people were exposed to trichloroethylene until the filter was replaced. The state and federal Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) is 5 ppb. In October of 1994, all of these wells received another GAC unit. With adequate monitoring, the 2 GAC filters should prevent exposures to site contaminants.

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Health Concerns

Residents living in homes with the single GAC filter units were exposed to trichloroethylene during episodes of VOC breakthrough. These exposures occurred for short periods of time prior to filter replacement. **Although residents may have been exposed to TCE at levels above state standards for short periods of time, no short or long term health effects are expected**. These wells received a second GAC unit in October of 1994. It is unclear if all wells that need to be monitored are presently being monitored. The CT DPH has recommended to EPA that an inventory of all wells in the area be conducted to make sure appropriate wells are being monitored. This is important to make sure no area residents are being exposed to contaminants. The attached fact sheet provides information about trichloroethylene. If you have further health questions, please call (860) 509-7742.

Water Quality and GAC Filters: What You Should Know

- Thirty-three private wells are currently being monitored quarterly by the Durham Manufacturing Co. and the Merriam Manufacturing Co. under order from the CT DEP.

- Residents with GAC units should be aware of the importance of regular drinking water well monitoring and timely filter replacement. If you have any questions about monitoring and/or the filters, call (860) 424-3705.

- Water quality should be checked on a regular basis for homes with GAC units. Water should be checked for bacteria (total coliform). Testing for VOC compounds should occur in the water system at a point before and after the GAC filters to determine how well the filters are working.

- If the contamination is identified in the filtered water, the filter material should be replaced. The contamination is usually not detectable except by testing. No change in odor, clarity or taste would generally occur when the contamination is present.

For More Information:

State of Connecticut
Department of Public Health
410 Capitol Ave
Hartford, CT 06106
- EEOH Division: (860) 509-7742
- Water Supplies: (860) 509) 7333

State of Connecticut
Department of Environmental Protection
Permitting, Enforcement & Remediation Division
79 Elm St.
Hartford, CT 06106
- Potable Water Program: (860) 424-3705
- Federal Superfund Program: (860) 424-3705

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1 Congress St. Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02114-2023
(617) 918-1273

Agency for Toxic Substances
and Disease Registry, Region I
60 Westview St.
Lexington, MA 02173
(617) 918-1490

Director of Health
Town of Durham
P.O. Box 428
Durham, CT 06422
349-3452

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