Department of Toxic Substances Control

Preventing environmental damage from hazardous waste, and restoring contaminated sites for all Californians.

State of California

California Environmental Protection Agency

Fact Sheet, March 2006

Wyle Labs Investigation Update

This fact sheet gives an update on the investigation and cleanup of the former Wyle Laboratories site in Norco, California. The goal of the investigation is to find and clean up chemical contamination that resulted from Wyle's former operations. This includes sampling areas around the site to find any chemical contamination that has moved offsite into the community.

Our agency is the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). Our mission is to protect human health and the environment by overseeing the investigation and cleanup of this site. Here is a brief summary of what's in this fact sheet:

- ✓ Follow-up tests at Norco High School showed no change from last summer, with the exception of the Science Building.
- ✓ Low levels of vinyl chloride were found in more rooms in the Science Building at Norco High School, though there is still no health risk to students. No vinyl chloride was found in any other buildings.
- ✓ Follow-up tests at Norco Elementary and Intermediate Schools show no change from last summer, and the schools remain safe.
- ✓ We have mapped out the location of the plume of shallow contaminated groundwater, and have some sampling results for deep groundwater.
- ✓ Two cleanup systems are ongoing: one on site and one near Golden West Lane.
- ✓ Leukemia is not caused by chemicals found in groundwater at this site.

Community Meeting

March 21, 2006
Open House: 6-7 p.m.
Presentation: 7 p.m.

Corona-Norco Unified School District
2820 Clark Avenue, Norco
Learning Center South Meeting Room

For information on accessibility (wheelchair ramps, etc.) or to request a reasonable accommodation (such as translation or sign language interpretation), please call Kim Foreman at (714) 484-5324 at least one week before the meeting.

More detailed information is on our website and at the locations listed at the end of this fact sheet. We also invite you to attend the March 21 meeting to talk to our staff and to learn more.

Latest Norco High School results

Re-tests in January 2006 of the air in 12 classrooms in Norco High School buildings other than the Science Building showed very low levels of the common solvents TCE (trichloroethene) and PCE (tetrachloroethene) in the classrooms. These levels are similar to what was found in previous tests, and are similar to what is found in outside air, both in Norco and in surrounding communities. ***They do not pose a health risk***.

In January 2006, workers also tested the indoor air in the Science Building at the high school. All classrooms, laboratories, and utility rooms on the first floor were sampled, as well as four rooms on the second floor. We required Wyle to do this testing after previous indoor air sampling found low levels of the chemical vinyl chloride in some classrooms. The goal was to determine if vinyl chloride is present throughout the Science Building and to make sure that the school is safe.

Very low levels of vinyl chloride were found in the air in three of the six classrooms on the first floor, all of the labs on the first floor, the four rooms on the second floor, and the utility rooms. These levels are similar to those seen in previous sampling in the Science Building, though this round of sampling included more rooms. ***The levels are so low that they do not pose a health risk to students.*** However, they may pose a slight increase in risk to a teacher who is assumed to work in the room for 40 years or more. (The Science Building was constructed in 2003.)

Very low levels of TCE and PCE were found in classrooms at levels similar to what is found in outside air. ***They do not pose a health risk to students or teachers***.

Sampling at the high school also included groundwater and soil gas. Soil gas is made up of chemical vapors that come from contaminated groundwater. TCE, PCE, and vinyl chloride were found in the soil gas at low levels that do not pose a health risk. TCE and PCE were also found in shallow groundwater at levels that do not pose a health risk. Vinyl chloride has not been found in shallow groundwater.

Next steps at the Science Building

Because of the long-term risk to faculty ("long-term" meaning their exposure is assumed to be for 40 years or more) from the vinyl chloride, we directed Wyle to reduce the low levels of chemicals in the air in the Science Building. DTSC and Wyle have been working with the Corona-Norco Unified School District to evaluate the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system in the Science Building. The goal is to determine how best to reduce the levels of vinyl chloride in the air. The HVAC evaluation will be completed within a few months. Other possible solutions may include sealing cracks and openings and/or pulling vapors from underneath the Science Building. Under our supervision, Wyle will continue monitoring indoor air, soil gas, and groundwater at the high school on a regular basis.

While the investigation goes on, we will monitor the Science Building to make sure that it continues to be safe. The ultimate goal is to find the source of the vinyl chloride, TCE, and PCE, and clean it up quickly and permanently.

Norco Elementary and Intermediate School latest sampling results

In December 2005, Wyle re-tested the indoor air, groundwater, and soil gas at the elementary and intermediate schools. The goal was to see if the results change from one season to the next. The previous tests were done in July 2005. All test results show that the schools are safe:

Low levels of TCE and PCE were found in the air inside some classrooms. The levels found in indoor air are similar to outdoor air, and are in the same range as the July results.

Soil gas samples showed trace levels of TCE, PCE, and vinyl chloride. These vapors are apparently not getting into the buildings and no one is exposed to them.

TCE, PCE, and vinyl chloride were not found in the groundwater. Results of the December sampling were similar to the July results.

Tap water at the schools not affected

The tap water used at the schools is supplied by the City of Norco from distant wells and other sources. The tap water at all three schools was tested in September 2005 and no contamination was found.

Shallow groundwater contamination plume mapped out, some deeper contamination found

The testing at the schools is only one part of a much larger ongoing investigation. With our oversight, Wyle has taken hundreds of groundwater and soil gas samples on the Wyle property and in the surrounding areas. We now believe we have enough information to make a map of the contaminated plume in shallow groundwater. This map will be available at the March 21 meeting. The shallow groundwater is a possible source of indoor air contamination.

TCE and PCE in offsite groundwater appear to come from a source inside the Wyle property in the northwest area of the site. The plume extends offsite along Golden West Lane, toward Third Street, to the southwest past the intersection of Third and Hillside and the southern portion of Buckboard Lane, then southwesterly past the northern portion of Norco High School.

In addition, a geologic study of the area has found several bedrock fractures that may be pathways for contamination in deeper groundwater to flow offsite. This study is called a fracture analysis. In January 2006, workers sampled the groundwater in these fractures by drilling “coreholes” in the bedrock. The sampling found TCE and some related chemicals in the groundwater in most of these fractures.

This fracture analysis is in the early stages and will continue.

More indoor air tests to be done in homes

Now that we know where the shallow groundwater plume is, the next step is to make sure that chemical vapors are not getting into homes above this plume at levels that pose a potential health risk. We are requiring Wyle to test the indoor air at 45 homes that are located over the groundwater plume and we are planning to send letters to these homes to ask their permission to sample. The indoor air sampling is proposed for spring 2006 and is contingent upon receiving access from the residents. We have already done indoor air testing in two homes at El Paso and four homes at the intersection of Hillside Avenue and Third Street.

Leukemia not caused by contaminants found in groundwater at this site

The major contaminant from the Wyle site is TCE, with small amounts of PCE. Vinyl chloride, a known breakdown product of both TCE and PCE, has been detected in the Science Building at Norco High School. Concern has been raised regarding the potential for Wyle-related contaminants to cause leukemia, especially at the high school. TCE, PCE, and vinyl chloride are not associated with development of leukemia. TCE and PCE have caused liver and kidney tumors in laboratory animal studies, and vinyl chloride can cause liver tumors in people who have long-term exposure to very high levels. These types of levels have not been found at this site.

Vapor removal on Golden West Lane

With our oversight, Wyle has started removing chemical vapors from the soil in the area next to the site’s northwestern boundary. This system uses a vacuum to pull chemical vapors from the soil near the southern end of Golden West Lane.

Groundwater cleanup ongoing on site

Since the most effective cleanup is to remove the source of contamination, a groundwater treatment system has been operating on site for the last two years. The system is similar to the one near Golden West Lane except that it pumps out and cleans the groundwater as well as the soil vapor. Wyle is also starting a pilot test of another cleanup technology that involves injecting a substance called permanganate into the groundwater to break down the contamination into harmless compounds.

The ultimate goal is area-wide cleanup

The investigation at the schools, development of the groundwater plume map, and the two ongoing cleanup systems are only a small part of the overall Wyle investigation and cleanup.

The ultimate goal is to find out the full extent of the chemical contamination from the Wyle site and clean it up. We will continue to keep you informed as this investigation proceeds, and the cleanup proposal will be offered for public review before we make a final decision.

For more information

If you have questions or would like more information about this site, please contact:

DTSC Public Participation Specialist
Kim Foreman, (714) 484-5324
email: KForeman@dtsc.ca.gov
TOLL-FREE: (866) 495-5651; press "4" when the recorded message starts

DTSC Senior Project Manager
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Media Inquiries

DTSC Public Information Officer
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email: JGarcia1@dtsc.ca.gov

For more information about our agency, please visit our website at www.dtsc.ca.gov

Notice to Hearing Impaired Individuals: TDD users can use the California Relay Service at 1-888-877-5378 to reach Public Participation Specialist Kim Foreman at (714) 484-5324.

INFORMATION LOCATIONS

The sampling results as well as other Wyle-related documents are at Norco City Hall, 2870 Clark Avenue, Norco; and the Corona Public Library at 650 S. Main Street, Corona.

We also have a complete set of records at our office at 5796 Corporate Avenue in Cypress, California. Please call the File Room Coordinator at (714) 484-5337 to make an appointment to view them. Some reports and sampling results can also be found on our website at: http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Wyle_Laboratories/index.html

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Department of Toxic Substances Control
5796 Corporate Avenue
Cypress, CA 90630

Inside: Latest news on Wyle Labs investigation
March 21, 2006 Public Meeting