

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

**Department of Toxic Substances Control** – Our Mission is to protect California's people, communities, and environment from toxic substances, to enhance economic vitality by restoring contaminated land, and to compel manufacturers to make safer consumer products.

## Indoor Air Study Near the Former Courteous Cleaners Site in Richmond, California

**2022 Barrett Avenue, Richmond, California 94801**

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is investigating contamination near a former dry cleaner, known as Courteous Cleaners (Site), located at 2022 Barrett Avenue in Richmond (see map below). Courteous Cleaners, which operated between 1960 and 2001, used tetrachloroethylene (PCE), in their dry-cleaning operations. This PCE may have contaminated the soil and groundwater nearby.

In October 2023, we took several soil gas samples along the sidewalk on Barrett Avenue, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, and 21<sup>st</sup> Street that detected PCE, trichloroethene (TCE), benzene, vinyl chloride, and other volatile organic compound (VOC) chemicals. The results indicate the need for further investigation of the Site and the area nearby.

### What Caused the Contamination?

Courteous Cleaners and other dry cleaners used PCE in dry cleaning operations for many decades prior to its ban. After a spill or release into soil and groundwater, PCE can break down and be released into the air between soil; this is called soil gas (also known as soil vapor). Soil gas can spread beneath nearby buildings and residences. Then soil gas can rise through the soil and get inside the buildings above through cracks in the slab and where utility lines like water and electricity enter the building. This process is called vapor intrusion. The chemicals detected in the indoor air can be found in many common consumer products and be present in outdoor air.

### What are the Risks from the Contamination?

PCE is released into the environment where human exposure can come from eating contaminated food, direct contact with skin, or breathing in the vapors--which is the main way of exposure from this Site. PCE vapors are invisible and mostly odorless. Breathing air contaminated with PCE and other chemicals detected may harm your health over time. According to the State of California, PCE, TCE, and some of the other VOCs can cause cancer. In addition, women who are or may become pregnant face higher risks from exposure, as TCE can harm the developing fetus. Visit the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) website for detailed fact sheets on the health effects of PCE and TCE at:



**Tetrachloroethylene (PCE)**

<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts18.pdf>

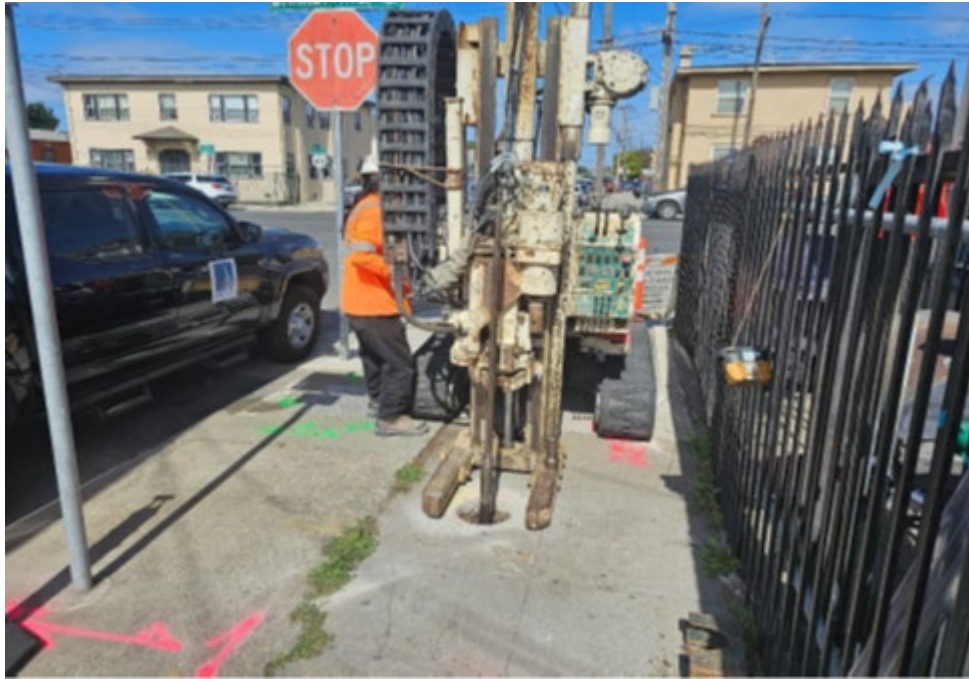


**Trichloroethene (TCE)**

<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tfacts19.pdf>

### **What is DTSC Doing About the Contamination?**

In October 2023, DTSC installed several underground probes along Barrett Avenue, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, and 21<sup>st</sup> Street to sample soil gas and groundwater near the Site. Based on the levels found, DTSC determined that there is a possibility that contamination from the former dry cleaner could be impacting the indoor air in some of the nearby buildings. DTSC issued a Proposition 65 Notification to Contra Costa County on December 18, 2023, to alert the public of this potential threat to human health and the environment.



***Soil Vapor Sampling with Underground Probe Installation beneath 20<sup>th</sup> Street***

On December 27, 2023, DTSC sampled outdoor air near the Site and indoor air at nine surrounding properties. We have reviewed the sampling results and have notified property owners and tenants of the results.

### **What Comes Next in the Investigation?**

The soil gas sampling results from October 2023 prompted the need for indoor/outdoor air sampling in December 2023. The results of the December 2023 air sampling showed there was low risk from vapor intrusion for the residents near the Site, but additional sampling is needed to confirm the results. Next steps include an order to the current property owner and any people responsible for the contamination (responsible parties) to continue sampling and cleanup of the Site. These responsible parties will be required to notify the community when additional sampling is planned.

For more information about the Site, please visit DTSC's EnviroStor database at:

<https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>. Please enter **60003256** or "**Courteous Cleaners**" into the search field.

### **Who Can You Contact for More Information?**

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***Courteous Cleaners Site Location and Investigation Area  
2022 Barrett Avenue, Richmond, California 94801***



**Hearing impaired** individuals may use the California Relay Service at 711 or 800-735-2929 TTY/VC0/HCO to voice.



Additional information on DTSC sites can be found through our [EnviroStor](#). (rev. 5-2020)