

News Release



EMBARGOED until
1:30 PM, Feb. 28, 2008

Contact: Doug Schultz
MDH Communications Office
651-201-4993

John Linc Stine
Environmental Health
651-201-4675

Community meetings planned to discuss progress in east metro groundwater contamination investigation

Health Based Value for PFBA established; levels and extent of contamination appear stable

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will hold a series of public meetings, beginning Tuesday, March 4, in six communities in Washington County to update residents on what has been learned in the past year about perfluorochemicals (PFCs) in groundwater and discuss public health concerns. Staff will discuss the revised health-based exposure limits for PFCs, a summary of groundwater sampling results and findings from the water treatment device evaluation.

The meetings will take place in Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park, Hastings, Lake Elmo, Oakdale and Woodbury. There will be an open house period before and after the meetings and an opportunity for residents to ask questions during the meeting. (A complete schedule of the meetings is included at the end of this news release).

About one year ago, staff from MDH and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) held meetings in the south Washington County area after widespread perfluorobutanoic acid (PFBA) contamination was found in the groundwater underneath Woodbury, Cottage Grove, Newport, St. Paul Park, South St. Paul and Hastings. In 2004 and 2005, two other PFCs, perfluorooctane sulfate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) were found in private wells in Lake Elmo and several city wells in Oakdale.

"We've made a lot of progress in the last year and even though we've been providing regular updates in a variety of ways, we felt it was time to come back to the communities to share what we learned," said John Linc Stine, division director for Environmental Health at MDH.

MDH has established a Health Based Value (HBV) for PFBA of 7 ppb. This number is higher than the drinking water guideline of 1 ppb that was used previously. That guideline was based on limited health information about PFBA and it how it might compare with PFOA.

An HBV is the calculated concentration of a groundwater contaminant, or a mixture of contaminants, that poses little or no risk to health, even if consumed daily over a lifetime. An HBV is one consideration used by state groundwater and environmental protection programs to make decisions and recommendations about groundwater contamination.

The new HBV for PFBA reflects a clearer understanding of its potential for health impacts during fetal and other developmental life stages and of how long it remains in the human body. The new HBV is designed to protect human health, including developing fetuses, infants and children. As with all other health based exposure limits for contaminants, MDH will review new toxicological information as it becomes available.

“Generally speaking, PFBA is less toxic than we previously thought, in part because it passes through the body even more quickly than was suspected earlier,” said Helen Goeden, Ph.D. the MDH toxicologist who worked on the HBV.

The new HBV takes into account the results of three major studies; a 28-day study of rats, a 90-day study of rats, and a developmental study of mice exposed before birth. The 28- and 90- day studies were commissioned by 3M but conducted by an independent testing laboratory. The developmental study was conducted by scientists at the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory.

The revised value for PFBA means that a well advisory will no longer be needed for about 30 of the wells that currently have an advisory in Lake Elmo and Oakdale. The drinking water from 23 private wells still exceeds health based exposure limits and continues to require water treatment to remove PFCs or alternate water. Early on, in 2007, the need to treat water in a much larger group of over 200 homes in Lake Elmo was eliminated when they were connected to the city water system.

In Cottage Grove, the new HBV means one well advisory will be issued in addition to nine private wells where water treatment systems have been installed and are still required. About 20 homes in Cottage Grove will no longer require a well advisory. All homes with an existing well advisory will be resampled to confirm the current levels of contamination before any well advisory is rescinded. No decisions have been made regarding the future of treatment systems installed in homes that no longer require treatment due to a well advisory. Well advisories are based on combined concentrations of PFOA, PFOS and PFBA.

Detections of PFBA in municipal water supplies in south Washington County are well below the new HBV.

Over the last year MDH and MPCA sampled more than 1,000 private wells to determine the size of the underground plumes of contamination. Although PFCs are detected in the groundwater across a large portion of southern Washington County, the areas that pose a health concern are very limited in size. A full year of monthly sampling of city wells in the affected communities shows that the levels of PFCs in the groundwater are stable – neither increasing nor decreasing. Continued sampling of public and private wells will tell if the PFC plumes are changing over time.

Staff at the meeting will also provide interim results of a formal study of point-of-use water treatment devices. The purpose of the study was to determine which types of devices, installed at the home’s tap, faucet or outlet, will reduce PFC contaminants effectively. The study, conducted by an independent laboratory, found five reverse-osmosis units and one carbon unit completely removed PFCs, including PFBA. Five additional devices are being further evaluated. A summary of the POU study is available on the MDH Web site at

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/wells/waterquality/pfcpoufactsheet.pdf>

PFCs and HEALTH ~ SCHEDULE OF COMMUNITY MEETINGS:

Cottage Grove

Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Open House

7:00-8:00 p.m. Presentation

8:00-9:00 p.m. Questions & Answers, Open House

Location: All Saints Lutheran Church, 8100 Belden Blvd, Cottage Grove, MN

Grey Cloud Island Twp., Newport, St. Paul Park

Date: Wednesday, March 5, 2008

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Open House

7:00-8:00 p.m. Presentation

8:00-9:00 p.m. Questions & Answers, Open House

Location: St. Paul Park City Hall, 600 Portland Avenue, St. Paul Park, MN

Hastings

Date: Tuesday, March 4, 2008

Time: 5:00-6:30 pm Presentation followed by Questions and Answers

Location: Hastings City Hall, Community Room, 2nd floor, 101 Fourth Street East, Hastings, MN

Lake Elmo

Date: Wednesday, March 12, 2008

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Open House

7:00-8:00 p.m. Presentation

8:00-9:00 p.m. Questions & Answers, Open House

Location: Oak-Land Junior High School, 820 Manning Avenue North, Lake Elmo, MN

Oakdale

Date: Thursday, March 13, 2008

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Open House

7:00-8:00 p.m. Presentation

8:00-9:00 p.m. Questions & Answers, Open House

Location: Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, MN

Woodbury

Date: Monday, March 10, 2008

Time: 6:00-7:00 p.m. Open House

7:00-8:00 p.m. Presentation

8:00-9:00 p.m. Questions & Answers, Open House

Location: Woodbury Lutheran Church, 7380 Afton Rd, Woodbury, MN (located south side of Valley Creek Road at Queens Drive)