

Water Gremlin

HEALTH ASSESSMENT SERIES | DRINKING WATER

Drinking Water – At a Glance

There is no information to indicate that drinking water is affected by contaminant releases from the Water Gremlin facility at this time.

- Trichloroethylene (TCE) has never been detected in municipal drinking water supplies from White Bear Lake and White Bear Township.
- Shallow groundwater on the Water Gremlin property was found to be contaminated during sampling from 1998-2004. Contamination did not travel to deeper groundwater used for drinking water.

Next steps:

- Groundwater sampling will be conducted this summer to determine if other groundwater releases have occurred at the Water Gremlin property since 2004.
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will sample a select number of private wells that represent area groundwater to provide additional reassurance to residents near the Water Gremlin facility.

Did the TCE in Air Reach the Groundwater?

The TCE air releases from Water Gremlin would not have been able to reach the groundwater. The TCE released in air spread out and moved through the atmosphere. TCE also breaks down in the atmosphere in days to weeks. If any TCE from the air ended up in surface waters or on soils, it would have quickly evaporated back into the air.

Past Groundwater Contamination at the Water Gremlin Property

Groundwater beneath the Water Gremlin property was tested in the 1990s after a facility inspection reported evidence of chemical spills. Testing showed a mix of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including TCE, in the shallow groundwater on the Water Gremlin property. The contaminants did not travel to deeper groundwater used for drinking water. Groundwater was monitored until 2004, when contaminants were no longer found above MDH health-protective drinking water guidance values.

TCE is a common contaminant in groundwater. Liquid TCE easily moves through soils, so TCE that is spilled or dumped can travel through soils to the groundwater. While TCE breaks down quickly in air, it breaks down slowly in groundwater.

There is no information to indicate that chemical use at Water Gremlin has affected the groundwater at this time. Recent Ramsey County hazardous waste inspections have not found any evidence of chemical spills or improper chemical storage. As a precaution, an environmental

consultant will follow an MPCA-approved workplan to sample groundwater at the Water Gremlin facility this summer. MPCA will provide the results to the community when they are available.

Municipal Drinking Water

The source of drinking water for many people in the area around the Water Gremlin property is municipal wells operated by White Bear Lake (WBL) or White Bear Township (WBT). Both cities regularly test for VOCs (which includes TCE) to meet Safe Drinking Water Act requirements. Data collected by MDH over the last 25 years shows TCE has never been detected in the municipal drinking water in WBL or WBT. Annual water quality reports, called Consumer Confidence Reports, describe where drinking water comes from (deep wells) and any regulated contaminants that are detected. They are available on the cities' webpages:

<https://www.whitebearlake.org/publicworks/page/consumer-confidence-report>

<http://www.ci.white-bear-township.mn.us/416/Water-Quality-Report>

The latest VOC sample analysis from one WBT municipal well showed very low levels of petroleum compounds - far below levels of concern to health. These detections may be caused by contamination from vehicle exhaust when the sample was collected. Because of the detections, this well is currently sampled quarterly for VOCs.

Private Wells

There are private wells in the area near Water Gremlin. Gem Lake residents rely primarily on private wells, as their city does not own or operate a community public water supply system. MDH will sample a number of private wells near the Water Gremlin facility that will be selected to represent area groundwater. MDH will provide the results to the owners and the community when they are available. If contaminants are found, additional sampling will be conducted.

Questions?

Call (651) 201-4897 and leave a message or email health.hazard@state.mn.us.

This information sheet is a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

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