

Early, Marti (DEC)

From: Early, Marti (DEC)
Sent: Wednesday, April 14, 2010 10:22 AM
To: Undisclosed recipients
Subject: Update # 13, Sulfolane investigation

Dear concerned citizen,

Investigation of sulfolane in groundwater from the North Pole refinery continues. Flint Hills Resources continues to test private wells, and they have expanded around the perimeter somewhat. See the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC's) website for a map of the perimeter determined with data through January: www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery/env.htm#map. Flint Hills will test outward until they stop detecting sulfolane. The company hopes to have the testing done by the end of the month. As of April 6th, Flint Hills has received well test results on 290 properties, with 115 that are Non-Detect and 175 with some level of sulfolane reading.

The Technical Project Team, formed to provide thorough oversight of the investigation and resolution of sulfolane issues, will have its first meeting in mid-April. You can view our website to find out who is on the team. You will receive a summary of that meeting (we estimate by the end of next week), which will include the topics they covered and any major issues discussed and decisions made.

DEC will soon create a mailing list for the same people who get this email. The new list will be easier to join and use. We will add your name, and you'll receive an email welcoming you to the list. There will also be a simple process for new people to add their names.

We know that many of you are interested in hearing more information on sulfolane and on talking to some of the people involved in this issue. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is working on an update to their health fact sheet on sulfolane, and they expect to make that available by mid- to late-April. We will use the email list to send it out to you. DEC is also planning an open house in the near future to give those who attend a chance to have discussions with various experts and people who have a level of authority or responsibility with this issue. The open house will be less formal than a public meeting. We'll keep you posted on the date and details of that meeting.

As a reminder, DEC is using the number of **25 parts per billion** as the level below which sulfolane in drinking water is not considered a public health concern. This number was the most protective level recommended by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in early February 2010. ATSDR's "public health action levels," were recommendations for sulfolane in drinking water and were based on three groupings of people by bodyweight and water intake. The level recommended to be protective of infants was 25 parts per billion, so water concentrations of sulfolane below that amount do not pose a health risk to infants, according to ATSDR. The agency also recommended levels for children of **40 parts per billion**, and adults of **87.5 parts per billion**. You can read more about this in the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services' Companion Guide to the ATSDR report, at www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/north-pole-refinery/docs/DHSSSulfolaneHCCompanion.pdf. These levels are recommended as highly protective of human health.

Also, we want to remind you that **water treated by the City of North Pole's public water system shows no detections of sulfolane, above the detection limit of 5 parts per billion (ppb)**. This means that the water coming to your tap from the city's system is not impacted by sulfolane. Traces of sulfolane (between 3.9 ppb and 9.3 ppb) have been found in the two wells that provide raw water to the city, but the treatment system removes those traces.

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services continues to say that well water with sulfolane in it at levels found in wells in North Pole is safe to use for showering and bathing (read more in their upcoming fact sheet). Sulfolane is not absorbed through the skin and it does not readily become airborne, so the only way for sulfolane to enter your body in a significant way is through ingestion, such as directly drinking it or indirectly through foods. Therefore, uses of the water that do not involve ingestion of the water are not a concern for exposure. The possibility of being exposed to sulfolane through eating plants raised with well water is an issue which a sub-group of the Technical Project Team will be researching this spring and summer. We know those of you with vegetable gardens want to know whether using your well water for gardening is safe, so we are working with the University of Alaska Fairbanks to design a study measuring the amount of sulfolane in crops. We will have some sampling data in the middle of the growing season to provide some

preliminary advice, and more detailed information from the study will be available in the fall. You can read more about gardening in the health department's upcoming fact sheet.

If you have questions about DEC's work on this issue, please write or call me or those listed.
Sincerely,

Marti Early
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www.dec.state.ak.us/spar/csp/sites/npolerefinery.htm

For more information:

On contaminated sites, contact DEC: Marti Early, 907-465-5206, marti.early@alaska.gov or
Ann Farris, 907-451-2104, ann.farris@alaska.gov

On health related information, contact the Alaska Division of Public Health, Nim Ha,
907-269-8028, nim.ha@alaska.gov

On public water supplies, contact DEC, Cindy Christian, 907-451-2222, cindy.christian@alaska.gov

On water testing or other refinery issues, contact Jeff Cook, Flint Hills Resources,
907-488-5104, jeff.cook@fhr.com