



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO HEALTH AGENCY

Public Health Department

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Health Agency Director

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: December 24, 2015

TO: LOCAL NEWS MEDIA

ISSUED BY: Penny Borenstein, M.D Health Officer, San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department, (805) 781-4553 (after hours number Sheriffs Watch Commander)

Water Board

Contact: Thea Tryon, P.G., Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (805) 542-4776.

Background: Pursuant to California Water Code Section 13271 the local health officer and the director of environmental health shall notify the public of health protective safeguards in response to a hazardous substance discharge

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the following report was received from the following person or entity on the date set forth below:

REPORTING PERSON OR ENTITY NAME: San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department, Environmental Health Services

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 1489, 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

PHONE: (805) 781-5544 Regular Business Hours

SUBSTANCE OF REPORT:

- 1. Hazardous and/or toxic compounds allegedly discharged or threatened to be discharged:** Trichloroethene, also known as trichloroethylene or TCE.
- 2. Date and Location where discharge occurred:** Date of release is unknown. TCE was detected above a state health based action level (MCL) in 5 of 11

residential water wells tested in the area of Buckley Road, east of Davenport Creek Road, Evans Road and Thread Lane, San Luis Obispo during a recent sample event performed by Environmental Health Services (EHS). EHS has notified all water well owners who participated in the sample event of the results with recommended actions. EHS is also mailing letters to property owners who surround the sample sites. The Regional Water Quality Control Board (Water Board) is a state regulatory agency with the responsibility for protecting the quality of the waters of the state and is conducting an investigation to determine the source of the pollution. EHS has inspected facilities and properties in the surrounding area and the Water Board and EHS have not found a current or historical source of TCE.

3. Identity of Hazardous Wastes and/or Toxic Compounds Involved:

TCE is a colorless, volatile, non-flammable liquid that has a sweet solvent or chloroform-like odor. TCE was historically used as an industrial solvent and metal degreaser. TCE was also used in the production of textiles, dry cleaning, food processing, and as a general anesthetic through the 1970s. Its use as a metal degreaser began to decline in the 1970s in favor of less toxic alternatives. Historically, TCE has been a groundwater threat throughout the United States. TCE appears to be a current potential health threat based on drought conditions, groundwater level decline, and possible associated reduced recharge from the nearby creek and change in groundwater flow direction.

The drinking water Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) for TCE is 5 micrograms per liter of water ($\mu\text{g/L}$) established by the State Water Resources Control Board under Health & Safety Code §116365(a). Odor is not a good method of detection, since people cannot smell TCE at concentrations near the MCL.

People who drink water containing TCE in excess of the MCL over time could experience health problems such as liver or kidney damage and may have an increased risk of cancer.

Notwithstanding the holiday in front of us, the Public Health Department is taking steps to notify the public as soon as possible. Affected well owners whose water well exceeds the MCL for TCE are advised to use bottled water for drinking and cooking and to install an activated carbon shower head filter, until they install a water treatment system to reduce the TCE concentration below the MCL. The Water Board is planning to hold a public meeting in early January to provide additional information.

For more information, visit:

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drinking_water/certlic/device/performance/datasheets.shtml

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/gama/well_owners.shtml

http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/gama/resources.shtml#coc

<http://www.slopublichealth.org>