

Army extends search for groundwater contamination

The Army continues to work to cleanup the groundwater contamination under the former Fort Ord. Recently, efforts have been underway to determine the boundaries of a groundwater contamination plume of carbon tetrachloride that has been found to extend from the former Fort Ord under portions of northeast Marina. The Army has identified an area of groundwater containing carbon tetrachloride, a common cleaning solvent, in the two shallowest aquifers extending from under the Preston Park area of the former base west along Reservation Road toward the Monterey Bay.

The plume is narrow and seems to parallel Reservation Road from the former Fort Ord, northwest at approximately 80 to 100 feet below the ground surface. Groundwater moves very slowly. Over time contaminants can degrade into simpler chemicals and become diluted. The Army is searching for areas where concentrations of carbon tetrachloride are above the maximum allowed by state and federal standards. Environmental regulations require action to be taken if concentrations of carbon tetrachloride in groundwater exceed 0.5 parts per billion. This concentration is approximately equal to one drop of carbon tetrachloride in enough water to fill a large swimming pool.

The municipal drinking water for the City of Marina remains free of carbon tetrachloride contamination. The groundwater contamination plume is separated from Marina's supply wells by several very thick and dense geological formations called aquitards. These aquitards keep the groundwater from moving vertically (downward) and thus protect the deeper aquifers used for water supplies. The water supply for the City of Marina is drawn from more than 900 feet below the surface and several aquitards below the contamination plume.

The municipal drinking water for the City of Marina remains free of carbon tetrachloride contamination.

The area's water supplier, Marina Coast Water District, tests the drinking supply for carbon tetrachloride and other chemicals regularly. During a door-to-door notification of Marina residents in the suspected path of the plume, the Army asked those who use a private well to allow them to test the water for the contaminant.

The Army is working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board to develop a solution to the problem of the carbon tetrachloride contamination. Together these agencies work as the Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure Cleanup Team in the oversight of all Superfund cleanup activities on the base including groundwater contamination.

Forty-five monitoring wells are being used by the Army as part of the carbon tetrachloride cleanup.

The Army is moving aggressively to determine the extent of carbon tetrachloride in the groundwater by installing monitoring wells along the suspected path of the plume. Regular sampling of these wells will help the Army identify the extent of the plume, the concentration of the groundwater contamination and its direction of movement. This kind of information is necessary to develop an effective cleanup plan for the groundwater.

Seven new monitoring wells were recently installed around the intersection of De Forest Avenue and Reservation Road in Marina. Five more monitoring wells have been placed along Preston Drive on the former base. There are now forty-five monitoring wells being used by the Army as part of the carbon tetrachloride investigation.

When the Army has sufficient data to develop a good picture of the area of carbon tetrachloride groundwater contamination, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board will consider options for correcting the problem. Members of the community will have an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed plan for the carbon tetrachloride cleanup.

For a copy of the latest Marina Coast Water District Consumer Confidence Report call (831) 384-6131, or write to the Marina Coast Water District at 11 Reservation Road, Marina, CA 93933-2099, or visit their web site at: www.mcwd.org

If you would like more information about carbon tetrachloride, visit the Water Clearinghouse web site at: www.estd.wvu.edu/ndwc/LinksFrame.html.

If you are interested in participating in the Fort Ord cleanup decision process, or would like more information on this subject, contact Lyle Shurtleff at (831) 393-9691 or email at cqc@redshift.com or visit the Fort Ord cleanup web site at www.fortordcleanup.com