

EPA Places Salt Lake City Groundwater Plume on National Priority List

Comprehensive investigation and cleanup planned for contamination associated with former Dept. of Veterans Affairs dry cleaning operation

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(Denver, Colo. – May 22, 2013) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced that the 700 South 1600 East PCE Plume site in Salt Lake City, Utah, was finalized to the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) of contaminated sites. Sites on the NPL are priorities for additional study and cleanup resources under EPA's Superfund program.

The 700 South 1600 East PCE Plume site is located near the George E. Wahlen Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center on the east side of Salt Lake City. The preliminary investigation area is bounded on the west side by 900 East, on the north at 500 South, on the east at 1600 East, and on the south by Yale Avenue.

“This is an important step toward addressing groundwater contamination and protecting water resources in Salt Lake City,” said Martin Hestmark, EPA's assistant regional administrator for Superfund programs in Denver. “We appreciate the efforts our federal, state, and local partners have taken to get this site addressed and look forward to working with the State of Utah, the City of Salt Lake, the local community and VA to address this plume as quickly and safely as possible.”

While a more detailed remedial investigation will occur under the Superfund process, prior sampling and investigations conducted by the State and EPA indicate groundwater in the area is contaminated with tetrachloroethylene, commonly known as PCE. The groundwater plume, first discovered in 1990 during routine sampling of the Mount Olivet Cemetery irrigation well, contains levels of PCE above federal health based standards. In 2010, water samples taken by the City from natural springs fed by groundwater in the area also indicated the presence of PCE.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with support from Utah Department of Environmental Quality (UDEQ), Salt Lake County Health Department, Salt Lake City, and the Department of Veterans Affairs, proposed the site for Superfund designation in September of 2012.

The Superfund program has provided important benefits for people and the environment since Congress established the program in 1980. Those benefits are both direct and indirect, and include reduction of threats to human health and ecological systems in the vicinity of Superfund sites, improvement of the economic conditions and quality of life in communities affected by hazardous waste sites, prevention of future releases of hazardous substances, and advances in science and technology.

Nationally, EPA is adding nine hazardous waste sites that pose risks to people's health and the environment to the NPL of Superfund sites. EPA is also proposing to add another nine sites to the list. Since 1983, EPA has listed 1,685 sites on the NPL.

For more information on the site and instructions for submitting public comments please visit: <http://www2.epa.gov/region8/700-south-1600-east-pce-plume>