



Plumsteadville MTBE

Department of Environmental Protection
2 East Main Street
Norristown, PA 19401

September 22, 2005

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Overview

Contaminated soil was discovered at Fitzgerald's Auto Repair on Easton Rd. when underground gasoline storage tanks were removed. The contamination was reported to DEP in March 2005. One of the ingredients added to gasoline is MTBE, which is intended to make gasoline burn more cleanly. MTBE is different than many other constituents of gasoline, however, in that it dissolves readily in groundwater. MTBE was found in the groundwater at Fitzgerald's and in some private wells in the area.

Remedial action was taken by Fitzgerald's to remove the contaminated soil in May 2005, and clean drinking water was provided to affected residents and businesses. A portion of the costs incurred by Fitzgerald's is covered by insurance under USTIF, the Underground Storage Tank Indemnification Fund.

Throughout the summer, DEP has been actively sampling residences and businesses in the vicinity of Plumsteadville to identify the areas affected by MTBE contamination in groundwater. In the course of identifying affected areas, DEP determined that groundwater under the Wawa gas station on Easton Rd. was also contaminated with MTBE. As a result, DEP compelled Wawa to determine the source and extent of the contamination associated with their property. That investigation is currently under way and is described more fully below.

DEP's efforts are being conducted at the same time that environmental consultants for Fitzgerald's and Wawa continue their work to identify the potential sources and extent of contamination.

DEP recognizes an action level of 20 ppb (parts per billion) in drinking water. That is equivalent to less than 1/2 drop in an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Plumstead Township has posted information on their Web site about their own sampling of public water supply wells that service housing developments near Plumsteadville.

Summary of Well Sampling Results

The area of concern is located generally from Fitzgerald's Auto Repair north/northeast toward the intersection of Meetinghouse Rd. and Stump Rd.

As reported on August 23, 2005, the following is still the case:

- No MTBE over 20 ppb has been found southeast of Hancock La.
- No MTBE over 20 ppb has been found northeast of Meetinghouse Rd.
- No MTBE over 20 ppb has been found northwest of Stump Rd.

The only affected residents and businesses with MTBE at or above 20 ppb are located at the southwest corner of Easton Rd. and Stump Rd., and north/northeast from Fitzgerald's toward the intersection of Meetinghouse Rd. and Stump Rd.

NOTE: All affected residents and businesses that are known to have MTBE at or above 20 ppb in their groundwater have been protected by carbon filtration units or by being provided with bottled water.

Sampling conducted by DEP on the northwest and northeast sides of the intersection of Meetinghouse Rd. and Stump Rd. shows levels of MTBE well below the 20 ppb action level. Residents whose wells are sampled by DEP are sent a letter with the specific results of the samples that DEP took.

What's Happening Right Now

On September 19, Fitzgerald's Auto Repair submitted a Site Characterization Report to DEP which is currently under review by DEP's technical staff. DEP will report its conclusions in a future update. A copy of the report has been sent to the Plumstead Township office.

During the week of September 19, Wawa's environmental consultant began installing new groundwater monitoring wells on the Wawa property. These wells are being installed to identify the location of any groundwater contamination that may exist in that area. Wawa hopes to have sampling results from these new wells by the 3rd week in October. Wawa has provided information to the township that is also available on the township's Web site.

Under DEP's regulations, Wawa is required to submit a Site Characterization Report by February 25, 2006. In the meantime, Wawa is required to initiate Interim Remedial Actions to help resolve the problem in the short term or to reduce the severity of the problem. One such Interim Remedial Action that Wawa has already taken is to supply the Plumsteadville Volunteer Fire Department with clean drinking water (first with bottled water, and now with carbon filtration units).

DEP sampled additional homes in the Plumsteadville area on September 22 to further identify the affected area.

For More Information

For more information about MTBE in drinking water and related topics, visit:

Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) MTBE page: <http://www.epa.gov/MTBE/>

EPA's Water Quality Criteria page on MTBE: <http://www.epa.gov/OST/drinking/mtbe.html>

For more information about protecting your groundwater, visit:

DEP's page on Private Water Wells in Pennsylvania:

<http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/deputate/watermgmt/wc/subjects/SrceProt/well/default.htm>

DEP will continue to provide updates as new information becomes available. Interested parties may contact Dennis Harney, Community Relations Coordinator, at 484-250-5819 for more information.