



Questions & Answers Regarding Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) & the Robert Treat Apartment Investigation

Background

The Milford Health Department has been informed by the CT Department of Environmental Protection (CT DEP) that tetrachloroethylene has been found in groundwater on the property located at 987-995 Bridgeport Avenue, formerly Milford Cleaning Village. CT DEP is recommending additional investigation of the area because tetrachloroethylene was also found in groundwater on the Robert Treat Apartments property. In the coming weeks, you may see staff from a well drilling company installing groundwater monitoring wells around the apartment complex property. The wells will help us learn more about tetrachloroethylene in the groundwater. At this time, there is not enough data to indicate if residents are actually being exposed to any tetrachloroethylene. The investigation will provide answers to the question of potential exposures and will allow health officials to determine if any health risk is present.

What is Tetrachloroethylene (PCE)?

Tetrachloroethylene is the main chemical found in the groundwater beneath the former Milford Cleaning Village and Robert Treat Apartment properties. Tetrachloroethylene is a chemical that is widely used for dry cleaning of fabrics and for metal degreasing. Other names for tetrachloroethylene include perchloroethylene (perc), PCE, and tetrachloroethene.

How Can You Be Exposed to PCE?

In order to be exposed to PCE, you have to come into contact with it and it has to get into your body. Apartment residents are on municipal water that is regularly tested and is safe to drink. However, PCE in the groundwater can evaporate from the groundwater, move up through the soil and enter indoor air through cracks in a building's foundation. The only way you could be exposed to PCE is from breathing vapors that could have entered indoor air. At this point we do not know if any PCE has entered the indoor air of any living areas in the apartment complex. The environmental investigation will help us answer that question.

Is Exposure to PCE Harmful?

Any substance or chemical that enters your body can be harmful if you take in too much. Whether your health will be affected by a chemical to which you are exposed depends on several factors:

- How much of the substance you take in;
- How long you are exposed to it;
- How it enters the body (eating, drinking, breathing, or touching);
- Your age, general health, and other individual traits that determine how susceptible you are to adverse health effects;

- Other exposures you have to the same or similar substances; and
- How toxic the substance is.

The paragraph below summarizes what we know about the health effects from exposure to PCE, based on studies of people exposed to PCE in the workplace and laboratory studies of animals. **It is important to emphasize that we do not have the data yet to know if you are actually being exposed to PCE.**

PCE

PCE can cause liver and kidney damage in animals exposed to high levels. It is not known for sure whether these same effects could occur in people. Animal studies also show that PCE can cause liver and kidney cancer. Based on this evidence, PCE is considered to probably increase the risk of cancer in people.

Is There A Medical Test To Show Whether I Have Been Exposed?

PCE (and its breakdown products) can be measured in blood. However, medical tests:

- cannot easily detect low amounts of the chemical in the body;
- cannot necessarily prove you were exposed;
- will not tell you about exposure you may have received in the past; and
- are not available at most doctor's offices.

Medical tests are best at detecting very high amounts of chemicals in the body (much higher than you would normally receive from an environmental exposure). Also, exposure to chemicals other than PCE can produce the same breakdown products as PCE. Therefore, medical tests for breakdown products cannot determine if you have been exposed to PCE or the other chemicals.

Please note that health officials are not recommending any medical tests at this time.

Who can I contact for more information?

For Health Questions:

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