

Media Release

Environment Protection Authority



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New groundwater contamination identified in South Edwardstown

Saturday 6 August 2011

The Environment Protection Authority is this afternoon letter box dropping 462 residents and commercial/industrial properties of Edwardstown near the corner of Daws and South Roads after it confirmed that hazardous chemicals have been found in groundwater (borewater) at 1102 South Road, Edwardstown.

Residents and property owners in the surrounding area are being advised to not use bore water for any purpose until further notice.

The EPA received a notification relating to groundwater contamination detected on the site on Wednesday, 27 July. As a result the EPA requested additional information to assess and verify existing testing results for the site. Information received on Thursday 4 August, enabled the EPA to determine there may be a potential risk to off-site properties within the neighbourhood.

The EPA is taking the precaution of notifying all residents and commercial properties in the potentially affected area.

Environment Protection Authority Director Science and Assessment, Peter Dolan, said that the EPA was taking every possible step to protect the health of the community.

“The EPA acknowledges that some commercial property owners may not receive their letter until Monday when they return to work – but the EPA is moving as quickly as possible to advise people, despite it being a weekend. For those people in the near vicinity of the site at the corner of Daws and South Roads, the letter distributors will be working through this afternoon and hope to have them all delivered by 5pm today.”

The contaminants identified are petroleum hydrocarbons and include benzene. The substances have been identified at levels above the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, prompting concerns about the potential extent of contamination that has moved off-site through the groundwater.

These chemicals are essentially fuels and oils associated with fuel storage and vehicle maintenance. Once in the soil, they can move down to the water table and contaminate groundwater.

At this stage, the contamination is suspected to be the result of a former leaking underground petrol tank.

There is a long history of investigations associated with this site.

The EPA was originally informed about on-site groundwater contamination at this location in 2002. At that time, work began to remediate the site starting with the removal of underground fuel storage tanks. Subsequent remediation works continued to be undertaken at the site and continued into 2007. The EPA holds reports relating to this work.

In 2003, the EPA received information that indicated the contamination was contained on-site and being actively managed. The notification received in the last fortnight has been the first to the EPA since May 2003.

The EPA has started working with the previous and current site owners in the last week to determine the extent of the contamination and a testing program will be developed in consultation with health experts and environmental consultants.

While the first priority will be to delineate the potential underground spread of the groundwater contamination, the testing program is also likely to include some vapour testing at selected locations to assess any impact on air quality.

Peter Dolan said that contamination investigations of this type are very complex and it may be some time before we know the full extent. We will keep the community informed of the results.

“I would also urge the entire South Australian community to understand that site contamination is a legacy of historical environmental practices and it requires ongoing management – sometimes over decades.

“This is a real problem that we all need to be aware of and I would take this opportunity to remind every SA resident with a backyard bore to be vigilant about regular testing of that alternative water supply to ensure it is safe to use.”

The area under investigation is detailed in the attached map.

For more information residents can contact the EPA on 1800 729 175.

For further information contact Nicki Stewart on 0434 609 394.

Daws Rd–South Rd, Edwardstown

