

Still can't drink the water

By The News-Record staff

Published: Saturday, January 10, 2009 11:44 PM MST

Sundance residents are still advised to not drink their tap water, after a diesel fuel spill contaminated the city's drinking water aquifer last week. Tests done earlier this week showed there was diesel fuel in the drinking water, but Crook County emergency management coordinator Gari Gills said the amount of diesel in the tests "was not medically harmful."

Residents can use their water for all other household purposes, as long as they do not notice any diesel smell in the water, Gills said.

About 40 percent of Sundance's 1,200 people were affected by the spill, all of them on the north side of the town.

Another set of tests was expected to be completed Friday night but was not done at press time Saturday.

Until those test results are back, the county is "erring on the side of caution" and asking residents not to drink their water, Gills said.

The spill was detected Jan. 4 at a well site where a contractor was drilling a second city well. It occurred during the drilling process, but Gills said he was not sure what went wrong and if the spill was due to negligence or was an accident.

The incident is under investigation by the state Department of Environmental Quality and the report has not yet been made public.

However, the contractor's drilling permit has been pulled, Gills said.

The DEQ could not be reached by press time and the identity of the contractor was not available.