

Windsor details cleanup efforts

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CLARK - Representatives from Windsor Energy and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality met Tuesday with residents here to discuss ongoing cleanup and public participation plans for the site of a natural gas well blowout.

Contaminants in a shallow aquifer can probably be reduced through on-site efforts, one specialist said.

The August 2006 blowout at the edge of a rural subdivision with about 25 homes led to the contamination of a nearby private drinking water well and a \$2,800 fine against Windsor by the DEQ.

Homeowners Mel and Connie King were warned last year not to drink their water after tests showed elevated levels of benzene. Windsor has since installed filtration equipment designed to remove contaminants and make the water safe to drink.

Testing in monitor wells has also shown groundwater contamination, and investigators are still working to define some boundaries of the plume.

No other private drinking wells have shown signs of contamination.

Windsor is expected to deliver to the DEQ by May 1 a report outlining alternatives for cleaning the groundwater at the site, said Michael Bullock, an environmental consultant with Terracon, a Billings company assisting in monitoring and cleanup for Windsor.

Terracon is working to install equipment that will pump air into water in monitor wells to help aerate volatile organic compounds out of the water and into the air, where they will be dispersed, Bullock said, adding that the process will also promote the growth of microbes beneficial to cleanup efforts.

Permits for that operation are pending but may be issued soon, he said.

Plans initially called for final cleanup work to begin in April 2009, but those efforts have accelerated after the detection of benzene in the King well.

Some residents have asked Windsor and the DEQ to produce a groundwater flow map of the Line Creek area, saying they would like a better understanding of local aquifers and the migration of the underground contamination plume.

Such a map exists of much of the contaminated area, based on monitor well data, but not of residential sections, said Dan Nebel, a Terracon geologist.

Bullock said data taken from residential drinking water wells could assist in creating a flow map of the subdivision, but such an effort would require the homeowners' consent.

He said Windsor had not yet sought that consent but has been consulting with attorneys regarding liability issues related to well access.

Terracon has water-testing data from 58 monitor well points and is testing 20 private water wells, including some more than three miles from the blowout site, Bullock said.

"I think we've made a lot of progress. We spent a lot of time doing pump tests and came away with some real good data," Nebel said.

There are separate shallow and deep aquifers in the area, he said.

"The aquifer characteristics we're seeing allow us to design a system to remediate the groundwater on the

site," Bullock said of the shallow aquifer.

Water in the deeper aquifer will be more difficult to clean but is present in relatively small amounts and not connected to other aquifers, he said, adding that such water is likely to move slowly and pose less risk to residents.

Andy Valkenburg, a quality assurance specialist from the water-testing firm Energy Laboratories of Billings, helped residents interpret technical lab data showing results of tests on their drinking water wells.

A September 2007 public participation plan drafted by Windsor and approved by the DEQ states that "Windsor Energy has set up a public notification Web site where full copies of all reports, including laboratory data, are available to download."

None of the most recent work plans or lab data were posted at the Windsor site, which states on its home page that it was last updated Oct. 31. A DEQ Web site devoted to the cleanup effort also lacked the documents.

Dan Johnson, a Windsor spokesman, said the information would be posted.

Kathy Brown, cleanup project manager for the DEQ, said the work plan and public participation information should have been posted on both Web sites but may not have been added to her agency's site due to an oversight.

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