

Questions & Answers from the View-Master Public Meeting Held on January 28, 2003



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This document contains responses to questions that were gathered at the public meeting that Oregon DHS held with former View-Master workers and concerned citizens on January 28, 2003, at the Elmonica School in Beaverton.

To develop answers, these questions were referred to several different agencies, including the Office of Environmental and Occupational Epidemiology of Oregon DHS, the Office of Environmental Services and Consultation of Oregon DHS, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Drinking Water Program, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, the Ombudsman's Office for Injured Workers in the Department of Consumer and Business Services, as well as the Mattel Corporation.

The responses were developed to the best of our knowledge at the present time. This document may be updated in the future if we receive new information.

Section II. Environmental Safety, Monitoring & Cleanup

Q: I worked in the Cascade Plaza Office Building, 8625 SW Cascade Ave. We were built in View Master's parking lot. I worked there from 1987 to 2001. Was there shared water or chance of TCE exposure for workers in our building? If so, what are the health risks and exposure?

Soil and shallow groundwater beneath the Cascade Plaza building were not affected by the contamination. Therefore, there is no exposure risk for building occupants from TCE beneath Cascade Plaza office building.

The Cascade Office Plaza's water supply is not from the View Master's supply well, but rather is provided by the City of Beaverton. The City of Beaverton's water supply comes from the Bull Run Reservoir located 40 miles east of Portland. The City's backup water supply wells do not draw water from groundwater beneath the plant site.

Q: Why will it take 30 years to clean up groundwater at the site?

Once groundwater gets contaminated, it is a difficult process to clean it up. TCE tends to remain in soil while a small amount of the chemical dissolves into groundwater. Even after large volumes of groundwater have been removed from the ground and cleaned, some TCE will still remain in soil and continue to contaminate the groundwater. Only after many years of groundwater removal and treatment will the TCE levels be reduced to an acceptable level. It is important to note, though, that exposure to groundwater is no longer occurring, so there is no current risk to people from groundwater. DEQ will require that groundwater use be restricted until the water is clean.

Q: Is the soil contaminated in the Greenway Park along the bicycle path? Is it safe for pets to eat the grass? Is cancer really epidemic among dogs in the Beaverton area? What can I do to protect my dog as well as myself?

Because there is no state cancer registry for animals, there is no way to determine whether cancer is excessive among dogs in Beaverton compared with elsewhere in Oregon. The maximum TCE concentration in Fanno Creek detected during surface water monitoring was 6 ug/L, which is only slightly above the drinking water standard. Most samples collected were below a detection limit of 0.5 ppb. We do not believe that pets have been exposed to levels of contamination from the site that could cause increases in cancer among pets.

All the former disposal areas are covered by buildings and paved parking. Very little soil contamination with TCE was found in the disposal areas as the TCE volatilized from the shallow zone soil over the last 20 years since disposal practices ceased. The groundwater beneath the park is not contaminated. TCE does not accumulate in grasses, and the grass would be safe to eat even if it was being fed by shallow groundwater contaminated with TCE.

No specific actions are necessary to protect pets or recreational users of the Greenway because Fanno Creek is not affected by TCE at levels that pose a health risk. The contaminated

groundwater is being controlled to prevent future impacts to the creek. The cleanup process includes groundwater and surface water monitoring to ensure the measures are protective to health.

Q: If Fanno Creek was being tested weekly, why didn't it show up then?

No monitoring was done on Fanno Creek prior to implementation of the Remedial Investigation (RI) for Parcel 3 in 1999. Fanno Creek and the adjacent wetlands were monitored during the RI for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and cyanide. A focused risk assessment was conducted when TCE and vinyl chloride was found in surface water within the wetland to assess potential risk to children who might come in contact with the contaminated surface water in the wetland. The results of that assessment showed that there would not be an elevated risk.

In the fall of 2001, GAF conducted bi-weekly sampling of the wetland and Fanno Creek to determine whether the cyanide detected in the wetland was "free" cyanide, which is the basis for the ambient water quality criteria (Ferro cyanide, a iron-cyanide complex was used in film processing). The results of the more frequent monitoring were considered in DEQ's remedy selection process. The results indicated that free cyanide concentrations occasionally exceeded the ambient water quality criteria of 5.2 ug/L within the wetlands drainage ditch, but did not have an adverse impact on Fanno Creek.

Q: Can TCE migrate from the contamination sites to public wells?

The migration of contaminated groundwater has been under control since July 2000 through pumping of the groundwater for treatment. The treatment system located near Fanno Creek has no air emissions. The TCE is captured by activated carbon and is transported to a treatment facility located in Washington. Treated groundwater is discharged to the sanitary sewer. No public wells besides the plant's supply well have been contaminated by the site.

Q: Is our City water tested accurately and frequently enough to guarantee safety?

The City's municipal water supply is monitored for safety on a constant basis. Monitoring data is available on the Oregon Drinking Water Program's website, <http://www.ohd.hr.state.or.us/dwp/>, by clicking on Data Online, then click on Name Lookup and enter your city to find your water supplier. Water safety data is posted online on a live, continuous basis. Further inquiries may be directed to the Oregon Drinking Water Program, at (503) 731-4010.

Q: Was Whitford Junior High school, which is directly across Hwy 217 from the site, affected? Could the contamination have gotten into the water at the school?

DEQ did not identify any wells in the area used by Whitford Junior High School. Since there are no records of a public water supply well for the school, the school would have been served by the City of Beaverton public water supply which was/is unaffected by the groundwater contamination at the plant.

The groundwater contamination is limited to areas west of Highway 217 because the plant well's use prevented movement of contamination away from the plant site. The plant's supply well provided drinking water to plant workers only.

Wastes from the degreasing operations at the plant were dumped on the ground from 1951 to sometime in the 1970s. The dumping areas were located west of the railroad tracks and east of Fanno Creek. The solvents leached into the groundwater. TCE slowly dissolves into groundwater. The contaminated groundwater was drawn into the plant's supply well when it was pumped.

During the 1950s to the 1970s, there were undoubtedly some emissions of TCE to the atmosphere associated with the degreasing operations at the plant. We have no direct air monitoring data during this time frame, and therefore, cannot say with certainty that TCE was never present in ambient air near the school you attended. Air modeling was done during the investigation to assess TCE transport in the atmosphere. Generally, TCE would be predicted to disperse to trace levels prior to reaching Highway 217.

Q: Will DHS and DEQ be using the new toxicity factors for TCE available from EPA?

The EPA has released new guidelines for TCE called cancer slope factors. Cancer slope factors are theoretical risk boundaries that are used for determining site cleanup standards. The EPA's new guidelines call for more stringent goals in site cleanup. Oregon DEQ has incorporated EPA's new guidelines in the remediation goals for the View-Master site to ensure that the cleanup measures are as protective to human health as possible.