

VILLAGE of SAUKVILLE

100 SOUTH MAIN STREET
SAUKVILLE, WISCONSIN 53080

(414) 284-9423

December 11, 1980

375-1884 (Metro)

HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO RESOLVE WATER CONTAMINATION PROBLEMS AT WELL #2.

- February, 1979 - Complaints were received by the Village concerning odor of the drinking water. The Village requested the D.N.R. to sample all wells to determine the source of the problem.
- 27, February, 1979 - D.N.R. responded in a letter indicating that the source of the odor problem seemed to be Well #2. Mr. T. Bosch of the D.N.R. recommended using Well #2 only when necessary to maintain pressure during high demand. DNR could not identify the nature or source of contaminant at that time.
- 28 February 1979 - The Village quit pumping water from Well #2 and took this well completely off of the Village supply system.
- 23 March 1979 - DNR required chemical storage lists from Freeman Chemical Corp., Tri-Par Oil and Saukville Feeds.
- 11 April 1979 - D.N.R. phoned to indicate samples of Village water had been referred to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for testing.
- 19 April 1979 - Village of Saukville Well #3 developed a coupling separation and had to be taken out of service. Well #2 had to be turned back on to maintain pressure until Well #3 was repaired.
- 23 April, 1979 - Letter received from Freeman Chemical indicating that they had tested Well #2 water and could find no compounds connected with their operation.
- 26 April 1979 - Repairs to Well #3 completed and Well #2 was taken out of service. Well #2 has not been used for drinking water in Saukville since this date.
- 27 April 1979 - Village Administrator's weekly memo distributed to all media. Recapped all of above information through this date.
- 31 May 1979 - Village of Saukville broke ground for a new well and pumphouse #4.
- 4 June 1979 - Letter from Joseph Harrison of E.P.A. indicated initial samples of water showed no organics present in a significant amount. Bottles were mailed to Village for collection of additional samples. Samples were mailed to E.P.A. on June 5, 1979.
- 7 June 1979 - Saukville Engineers Ruekert & Mielke conducted an aeration experiment and test to determine if odor could be removed by this method. Test results showed aeration to be marginally effective in removing odor. Plans were made to test purification with activated carbon filtration.
- 11 June 1979 - Dr. William Keck, Expert in underground water hydrology from University of Michigan was flown to Saukville at Village expense to analyze the flow of groundwater and recommend action on identification and containment of contaminant at Well #2. He recommended turning the well back on and pumping the water to waste if necessary to draw any contaminant from the area to Well #2 and prevent it from spreading elsewhere in the underground water supply. He said that based on the natural flow of underground water, it was highly unlikely that the pollutant would spread to other wells in Saukville.
- 12 June 1979 - Village began pumping Well #2 to waste (not for consumption) per Dr. Keck's recommendation.
- 27 June 1979 - Ruekert & Mielke conducted experiments with activated carbon filtration which were successful in removing odor from Well #2. However, the engineers reported that rather than permanent charcoal filtration, it would be more cost effective to construct a new main from Well #2 to Freeman Chemical Corp. for use as non-contact cooling water. Engineers also reported that a trace of odor had been discovered at Well #1. The odor factor at Well #1 was only 1.25 compared to 192 at Well #2.

- 29 June 1979 - D.N.R. letter from Ted Bosch reported that Village would have inadequate pumping capacity with Well #2 off. D.N.R. suggests limiting water supply or immediate connection to Freeman of Well #2.
- 11 July 1979 - Dennis Beckman from E.P.A. visited Saukville and met with Village and D.N.R. officials. He collected carbon samples which had Well #2 water saturation and raw water samples from Well #2. Drove them back to Chicago.
- 24 July 1979 - Village Officials met with officials of Freeman Chemical Corp. and Village indicated that water supply was limited without Well #2 - that Freeman as largest user would have to be shut off so that residential users could be supplied. Freeman Chemical agreed to pay for the cost of having a main installed to pump Well #2 water directly to Freeman for non-contact cooling water.
- 14 August 1979 - Letter from Dennis Beckmann of E.P.A. indicated that results of samples taken on 7/11/80 were inconclusive. Beckmann stated that "due to the nature of compounds present, further effort as to identity of the compounds not warranted". A memo attached from the E.P.A. lab indicated that they had ceased efforts of identification of compound at that time.
- 4 September 1979 - D.N.R. approved water main extension to Freeman Chemical Corp. Construction started in November.
- 8 November 1979 - D.N.R. letter of Ted Bosch indicates threshold odor tests were run on all wells. Contaminant had increased at Well #2 at that time. By continuously pumping Well #2, Well #1 was protected according to the D.N.R.
- 29 November 1979 - Well #2 connection to Freeman Chemical Corp. completed. All Well #2 water is now pumped directly to Freeman Chemical Corp.
- 11 January 1980 - Check for \$20,259.21 received from Freeman Chemical Corp. for cost of installing new main.
- 15 January 1980 - Edwin Zylstra of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency visited Saukville to take additional samples of Well #2 water. Sandra S. Ganderbring, Director of the Enforcement Division of E.P.A. had requested "priority sampling" of the Village Well #2 water. Village Administrator contacted Mr. Ed. DiDomenico of E.P.A. and was informed that a woman had complained to a "Congressman Eckerdt" about previous well problems and that he had requested E.P.A. to check further.
- 13 February 1980 - Ted Bosch of D.N.R. sent results of threshold odor tests run on all Saukville wells. The test results showed that the "contaminant" is still increasing at Well #2 but that there is no evidence of contamination at any of the other 3 municipal wells.
- 16 February 1980 - Village of Saukville dedicates its new Well #4 Pumphouse and Reservoir. This well was put into service and has been tested by all agencies as safe. The additional capacity generated by this new facility should meet the Village needs for the next 10 years.
- 18 February 1980 - Received letter from Ed DiDomenico of E.P.A. indicating the results of tests on water samples taken 1/15/80. Two organic compounds were identified:
1. Benzene at 0.2 parts per billion level
 2. Trichloroethylene at 0.5 parts per billion level
- They did not have any indication as to where the compounds were coming from at that time. Phone conversations with Mr. DiDomenico indicated that these quantities are not high enough to enforce action against and that the E.P.A. could not prevent Freeman from discharging the non-contact cooling water from Well #2 into the Milwaukee River at this level of concentration and the carcinogenic effect was negligible at this level.
- 19 February 1980 - Letter from E.P.A. of 2/18/80 was distributed to Village Board, Village President and made available to all members of the media at the regular Village Board meeting on this date.
- 16 May 1980 - Ted Bosch of D.N.R. transmitted results of 5/12/80 threshold odor tests on all wells. Bosch stated that "our results showed Wells 1,3 and 4 are not contaminated. Well #2 is still contaminated at approximately the same level".
- 29 July 1980 - Mr. Richard Boice and Ms. Karen Waldvogel of the E.P.A. visited

VILLAGE OF SAUKVILLE

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATOR'S WEEKLY MEMO

DECEMBER 12, 1980

WEEKLY CALENDAR

MONDAY DECEMBER 15, 1980 8:00 A.M. United Way Campaign meeting
7:30 P.M. Fire Dept. General meeting

TUESDAY DECEMBER 16, 1980 6:30 P.M. Licenses and Permits Committee meeting
7:30 P.M. Regular Village Board meeting
9:30 A.M. Meeting of Village Administrator and Auditor with
Farmers Home Administration officials in Village Hall

OUR RESPONSE TOMILWAUKEE JOURNAL REPORT ON SAUKVILLE DRINKING
WATER

To The Editor, Saukville Residents, Citizens of Southeastern Wisconsin.

This letter is undoubtedly one of thousands which have been written to your paper regarding one of the most basic of American Institutions, the Freedom of the Press. In order for this freedom or any other freedom to be protected, those exercising their right in this regard must do so with a high degree of responsibility.

On December 10, 1980 The Milwaukee Journal printed a story with page 1 headlines indicating that the "E.P.A. HAD FOUND TOXICS IN SAUKVILLE WATER." The story went on to say that "cancer causing contaminants, believed to be from Freeman Chemical Co. are present in underground drinking water supplies." This story failed to clearly point out that the toxics were found in only one well out of 4 in the Village and that this well was taken out of service in February of 1979 and except for 15 days in April of 1979 it has not been used for human consumption since.

The December 10, 1980 Journal story also failed to report that the E.P.A. has not even determined whether the 2 compounds, Benzene at 0.2 parts per billion and Trichloroethylene at 0.5 parts per billion constitute a risk to human health!

The Village contacted the E.P.A. and was informed that the lowest concentration of Trichloroethylene for which a risk has been determined is at the 2 whole parts per billion level (compared to 0.5 of 1 part per billion found in our Well #2). It was stated that if a million people consumed 2 liters of water with 2 parts per billion of Trichloroethylene every day for their entire life, 1 person out of the 1,000,000 would contract cancer. (Based on tests on lab animals) The same would be true for Benzene at the 1.5 parts per billion level. (Well #2 had 0.2 of 1 part per billion)

It was further reported that the Village indicated that "everyone suspects Freeman." While some people may suspect Freeman because of the proximity of the well building to the Freeman Plant, there has been no proof rendered from any agency as of this date that Freeman is the source of the toxics. It is possible that this may be shown in the future but we have always been very careful to not accuse until we have proof.

One of the most disturbing aspects of this whole matter is that all of the information which was reported by the Journal on December 10, 1980 had previously been made available to the public and the media in February of 1980. Local reports had been written and the Journal itself reported this information in its Accent Section on November 4, 1980! The story made it appear as though this "news" had been pried loose as a result of the investigative efforts of a reporter.

In an unrelated matter involving the Freeman Chemical Co. and D.N.R. the Journal reported on page 1 in its December 7, 1980 Sunday edition that the D.N.R. and the Chemical Co. had cleaned up chemical wastes in secret. The D.N.R. was called on the carpet for not providing information on a potential health hazard to the public. Essentially the same "crime" has been committed by the Journal. This date was made available to it in February of 1980 however, it wasn't until December of 1980 that it became worthy of front page news!

The Village of Saukville, in no way wishes to minimize any potential threat to the health and safety of its residents. However we feel it our responsibility to accurately portray the degree of that threat and to put it into perspective. In our opinion the Press also has this same responsibility.

In our judgement the exposure that this story was given was entirely out of proportion to the circumstances surrounding the situation. The Milwaukee Journal struck an uneven balance between the need to alert citizens about a potential health hazard and the necessity of protecting the image and integrity of a community as a desirable place to live and raise a family.

An examination of all of the facts surrounding this case will reveal that Government at the Local level has worked hard and, in our opinion, worked well to eliminate this potential threat to the health of residents. In order to allow those with an interest in the matter to examine the facts, a complete cronology of the events relating to the contamination problem has been compiled and is attached to this letter.

Any interested or concerned resident is encouraged to visit the Village Hall and examine the complete file on this matter.

Freedom of the Press, Religion and Personal Freedoms are a cherished and valuable commodity. The protection of these freedoms can be insured if those of us excersizing these freedoms do so with a sense of responsibility. The Milwaukee Journal violated this responsibility on December 10 and may have tarnished the reputation of a community unnecessarily.

Michael C. Harrigan,
Village Administrator
Village of Saukville

Saukville had collected samples of Well #2, Well #1 and Well #4 water. An inspection was also made of Freeman, Tri-Par and Saukville Feeds plants. Village Administrator directed a letter to Ms. Sandra Ganderbring on this date requesting results of all tests made on Saukville water samples.

- 23 September 1980 - Ted Bosch of D.N.R. reported that samples taken on September 8 indicated that the water quality in Well #2 was improving. He states that "the last 2 tests have shown improvement in the water quality at Well #2.
- 4 November 1980 - Milwaukee Journal reported in the Accent North Section on the contaminants in Well #2 water. This was included as part of a story on a hearing for Freeman Chemical held by the D.N.R. re: discharging of non-contact cooling water into the Milwaukee River. The Milwaukee Journal had previously reported on Well #2 and E.P.A. tests on June 7, 1979 and September 4, 1979.
- 18 November 1980 - Edwin Zystra of the E.P.A. visited Saukville and took water samples from Well #1 and Well #2 for testing.
- 26 November 1980 - Village received a letter from Ed DiDomenico of E.P.A. with test results of samples taken in July of 1980. The results were inconclusive because the contract lab which had done the tests did not analyze the samples at the lower levels required. (The tenth of a part per billion level) DiDomenico stated that a quicker turn around time would be requested on the November 18 samples.
- 7 December 1980 - Milwaukee Journal reported on front page of Sunday Edition on an unrelated "secret" cleanup of chemical waste in Washington County involving Freeman Chemical and D.N.R.
- 8 December 1980 - Village resident Mr. Heeren contacted Village Administrator for a copy of E.P.A. test results on Well #2. He had several months previously contacted the Village and had been given copies of this data. Indicated he had lost same and wanted additional copies. Copies were provided as requested.
- 10 December 1980 - Milwaukee Journal reported contacted Village Administrator regarding a conversation which he had with an "unidentified" Village resident who had "just" obtained copies of E.P.A. test results from the Village Office. Resident felt that Journal should investigate same as it could relate to Freeman Chemical Corp. Reporter described resident as a very "excitable" individual.
- 10 December 1980 - Milwaukee Journal printed a story on front page heading "E.P.A. FINDS TOXICS IN SAUKVILLE WATER." All of the information reported in the Journal story had been previously released to the press in February of 1980. News stories had previously appeared citing the same information as the Journal reported on this date. Story indicated that Benzene and Trichloroethylene are cancer causing. It did not report what the risk levels are nor whether the E.P.A. considers the concentration found to be hazardous. It was also not made clear that the only well which was affected by the contaminant was Well #2 and that the use of this well for Human Consumption had been discontinued nearly 2 years previous (in February of 1979).
- 11 December 1980 - Village Administrator contacted Donald Maddox Chief of the Regional Technical Support Section of E.P.A. in an effort to obtain detailed information on the "cancer causing" effect of Benzene and Trichloroethylene. Maddox reported that the E.P.A. had no knowledge of the cancer risk at the tenths of one part per billion level of these compounds. (The February samples showed two tenths (0.2) of one part per billion of Benzene and five tenths (0.5) of one part per billion of Trichloroethylene. He stated that for Trichloroethylene the lowest concentration of risk which has been determined is the 2 whole parts per billion level (not tenths of 1 part). He stated that if 1,000,000 persons were to consume 2 liters of water per day containing 2 parts per billion of Trichloroethylene that one (1) of these people would contract cancer. This is based on tests on lab animals.

In the case of Benzene (0.2 parts per billion found in Well 2 water) the lowest concentration for which risk has been determined is the 1.5 parts per billion level. Again, if 1,000,000 persons consumed 2 liters of water per day containing 1.5 parts per billion of Benzene for their lifetime, one of these people would contract cancer.

Village Administrator received several calls from residents on this date indicating that they had read the story and got the impression that contaminant was still in the Village water supply. Village Administrator contacted the Journal reporter expressing great concern over the story and Journal reporter agreed that it may have been misinterpreted. He stated that another story would appear on this date clearing up the concerns which I had expressed. No story appeared.

In addition to the above referenced tests the Village takes weekly water samples and sends them to the State Laboratory of Hygiene for bacteria testing. This practice has been followed for years.