

EPA to monitor Saukville water

By Thomas J. Hagerty

Journal Environmental Reporter

A groundwater sampling program to detect toxic chemicals and their possible movement in Saukville's drinking water will be established by the US Environmental Protection Agency as soon as possible.

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EPA officials have said toxic ben-

zene and trichloroethylene were detected in Saukville drinking water earlier this year.

Miner said EPA officials, as well as officials of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, would sample groundwater at all four well sites in Saukville at least once every three months.

Last week the EPA stepped up its investigation of the Freeman Chemical Corp. of Saukville and speeded up analysis with highly sensitive equipment in its Cincinnati laboratory of

samples taken Nov. 18 from Wells No. 1 and No. 2 in Saukville.

Well No. 2 is about 1,000 feet from the Freeman Chemical plant, which manufactures thermo-setting, acrylic, alkyd, urethane and polyester resins.

The Freeman case received high priority from the EPA after The Milwaukee Journal reported that the two potentially cancer-causing chemicals had been found in the underground Saukville water supply.

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The company has denied it was the source of the pollutants.

The EPA investigation is under the direction of enforcement chief Edward DiDomenico. He was not available for comment Monday.

Well No. 1 pumps drinking water to Saukville residents. Two other Saukville wells were not included in the Nov. 18 sampling.

Because of complaints from residents about a strong odor, said to resemble the smell of gasoline or paint, in their drinking water two years ago, Well No. 2 was taken off the community system on Feb. 28, 1979. It was hooked up to the Freeman plant on Nov. 29, 1979. Well No. 2 supplies cooling water, as much as 400,000 gallons a day, or half the total daily demand for the village.

On April 19, 1979, Well No. 3 broke down, and Well No. 2 was put back on the community system for a week.

Hookup explained

It was thought that hooking Well No. 2 to Freeman would suck the toxic chemicals out of the groundwater. The EPA detected 0.2 parts per billion of benzene and 0.5 ppb of trichloroethylene in Well No. 2 water samples taken Jan. 15.

Freeman discharges some of its liquid waste into village sewers. Michael Harrigan, Saukville village administrator, said consulting engineers for the village recently had inspected municipal sewers, using television cameras. He and DNR officials said they had not determined yet whether the private, lateral sewer line that connects the Freeman plant to city sewers had ever been inspected for leaks.

Bernard Schultz, water division supervisor for the DNR office in Milwaukee, said Monday that he had no record of what Freeman discharges into Saukville sewers.

According to two workers for Immaculate Conception Church, 145 Church St., Freeman cleaned up a chemical spill in August 1979 on the grounds of the church.

Parish is next door

The parish is adjacent to the Freeman plant. The company notified Father Walter Vogel of the church in a letter of Oct. 4, 1979, that it would prevent further contamination problems for the church by building a clay dike on the company side of the fence between Freeman and the church grounds, said Linda Booth of Saukville.

Booth, who taught at Immaculate Conception at the time, described the pool as containing a "sludgelike" substance that had killed grass on the church grounds.

Elizabeth Hespe, parish housekeeper, said:

"Freeman cleaned it up right away and planted new grass for us. Father never took the complaint further because the company was so cooperative."

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Part 1

EPA

Quick action vowed

From Page 1

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Currency change marked

Tel Aviv, Israel —UPI— A 100-shekel note has gone into circulation, marking the completion of the changeover from pounds to the new Israeli currency.

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EPA finds toxics in Saukville water

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Journal Environmental Reporter

Cancer-causing contaminants believed to be from the Freeman Chemical Corp. are present in Village of Saukville underground drinking-water supplies, a US Environmental Protection Agency official said Wednesday.

Further tests are underway to determine whether the contaminants — trichloroethylene and benzene — are at hazardous levels or are dissipating, said Donald Maddox, chief of the regional Technical Support Section of the EPA.

Three community wells had supplied all Saukville residents with drinking water. Well No. 2, near the Freeman plant, was taken off the municipal system about a year ago because officials of the village and Freeman Chemical suspected contaminants were seeping into groundwater from the chemical plant, said Michael Harrigan, Saukville administrator.

No. 2 services only the Freeman plant, supplying the company with nonprocess cooling water, he said.

Freeman Chemical uses about 400,000 gallons of water a day, on the average, or more than half the total daily village drinking water demand.

Freeman Chemical last month cleaned up chemicals it had dumped 22 years ago on a dairy farm in the Town of Wayne in Washington County. A Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources dump inspector found the rusty drums last July 22. The public was not notified of the find or the cleanup until it was re-

ported last Sunday by The Milwaukee Journal.

Maddox said he hoped EPA samples taken in Saukville Nov. 18 would indicate that trichloroethylene and benzene concentrations have declined. The thinking is that, because of the chemical company's heavy draw on well No. 2, suction on the well may suck most of the contaminants from the groundwater,

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Water

Toxics found at Saukville

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said Maddox and Harrigan.

In a letter last February, the EPA informed Harrigan that .5 parts per billion (ppb) of trichloroethylene and .2 ppb of benzene were found in samples taken from one of three community drinking water wells.

Saukville officials first requested the EPA and the DNR in February 1979 to sample the wells. Several residents had complained of unpleasant drinking water odors.

But neither the DNR nor the EPA were able to come up with the right kinds of tests, or sensitive enough analyses, to find anything that was cause for alarm until last February, said Harrigan. A reporter asked Harrigan Wednesday about the February report when a resident called to say he suspected Freeman was responsible for the contamination.

Harrigan said he wasn't sure of the source but that "everyone suspects Freeman."

Maddox said the first-round results for trichloroethylene and benzene were nearly at the minimum level at which detection was possible. The amount that comes from people's taps might be less, on the average, he said.

"We've gotten a very small spike on a chart, indicating that the compound is present at very low levels," said Maddox. However, he did not rule out the possibility that if the contaminants had been there for a long time and do not leave the groundwater in the future, people who drink it might have a higher cancer risk.