



Organization Contact:
Amy Bethge, Director of Health
abethge@hvhdct.gov
Phone: (203)264-9616

May 14, 2024

For Immediate Release

Notice on Private Well Contamination for Woodbury Residents

The Connecticut State Department of Public Health (CT DPH), the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Housatonic Valley Health District (HVHD), and the Town of Woodbury have been reaching out to inform residents of private well contamination in the Northeast section of Woodbury, bordering Watertown.

The presence of tetrachloroethene was detected in several wells in the area at a concentration above the CT Department of Health Drinking Water Action Level. The CT Department of Health has set an Action Level for tetrachloroethylene of 5 micrograms per liter (ug/L).

Action Levels are state guidelines for chemicals in private well water and are set at concentrations well below the levels that may cause a health effect in people or animals. The Action Level for private well water is the same as the US EPA maximum contaminant level (MCL) for tetrachloroethylene in public drinking water. A MCL is a federal, enforceable drinking water standard for public water.

HVHD and DEEP have been informing impacted residents via phone and mail. At this time, DEEP is continuing to investigate the source of the contamination. Residents who received a letter from HVHD requesting permission to sample their well are encouraged to reach out to have their well tested. Other residents outside of this area may choose to have their well tested on their own for volatile organic compounds. Residents may contact HVHD or DPH's Private Well Program for guidance on well testing.

Information regarding the contaminant:

What is Tetrachloroethylene?

Tetrachloroethylene, also known as perchloroethylene, PCE, PERC, and tetrachloroethene, is a chemical that is widely used for dry cleaning of fabrics and for metal-degreasing. This chemical can get into well water when groundwater comes in contact with a spill or other release to the environment.

Tetrachloroethylene is one of the more common non-natural chemicals found in Connecticut's groundwater due to chemical spills.

What is the Hazard Associated with Tetrachloroethylene in Drinking Water?

While it is unlikely that the levels of tetrachloroethylene typically found in drinking water would be harmful to your health over a short period of time, this contaminant is known to cause liver and kidney damage and cancer in animals exposed at high levels. Based on these facts, tetrachloroethylene is believed to probably cause cancer in people. Drinking water that has tetrachloroethylene may increase a person's risk of cancer.



Organization Contact:
Amy Bethge, Director of Health
abethge@hvhdct.gov
Phone: (203)264-9616

How Might I Be Exposed to Tetrachloroethylene from My Well Water?

Tetrachloroethylene evaporates easily from water, so in addition to taking it into your body through drinking, you may also be exposed to a large amount from breathing the air inside your home. Tetrachloroethylene gets into indoor air from appliances that use water (such as dishwashers and washing machines) and from the shower. Your body may also absorb it through the skin during a bath or shower. A simple way to absorb less is to turn on a bathroom fan while bathing or showering. This can prevent the buildup of tetrachloroethylene in the bathroom air.

Is There a Safe Level of Tetrachloroethylene in Drinking Water?

The CT Department of Public Health (CT DPH) has set an Action Level for tetrachloroethylene of 5 micrograms per liter (ug/L). An Action Level is a state guideline for a chemical in private well water. The Action Level for private well water is the same as the US EPA maximum containment level (MCL) for tetrachloroethylene in public drinking water. A MCL is a federal, enforceable drinking water standard for public water. If your well water has tetrachloroethylene at a concentration greater than the Action Level of 5 ug/L, you should stop drinking your water and using it for cooking until you can install a treatment system to remove the tetrachloroethylene. Action Levels are set well below the level that causes health effects in people or animals. So if you have tetrachloroethylene in your well water at a level above the Action Level, it is still probably at a level lower than what is harmful to your health. Nevertheless, it is a good idea to avoid drinking and cooking with water that has tetrachloroethylene at levels above the Action Level to reduce any chance for harm to your health.

What About Bathing and Showering?

Since you can inhale tetrachloroethylene and absorb it through the skin while bathing and showering, it is important to prevent these exposures as well. If the tetrachloroethylene level in your well water is greater than 50 ug/L (ten times greater than the Action Level), you should avoid bathing and showering until you can install a whole house treatment system to remove the tetrachloroethylene from all of the water you use in your home.

How Can I Find Out if There is a Problem with My Drinking Water?

The best way is to have your well water tested by a [state-certified water testing lab](#).

What Can Be Done if a Private Well Has Tetrachloroethylene?

If tests show that your well has tetrachloroethylene you should call CT DEEP or your local health department to report the problem. They may investigate to find the source of the contamination. If the levels are above the Action Level of 5 ug/L, you will need a treatment system to remove the tetrachloroethylene from the water. Contact the CT DPH Private Well Program to discuss water treatment.



Organization Contact:
Amy Bethge, Director of Health
abethge@hvhdct.gov
Phone: (203)264-9616

For more information, please contact:

Health and Treatment Questions:
CT Department of Public Health
Health Questions: (860) 509-7740
Treatment Questions: (860) 509-8401

Contamination Investigation Information:
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection: (860) 424-3705

To test your well water, or for other inquires:
Housatonic Valley Health District: 203-264-9616 or ehd@hvhdct.gov

###

The Housatonic Valley Health District serves New Milford, Oxford, Sharon, Southbury, Washington, and Woodbury. The mission of the Housatonic Valley Health District is to create better health outcomes and promote the highest attainable standard of health. This is accomplished through three principles, which include prevention, education, and outreach. HVHD prevents disease, injury, and disability for their community through regular inspections of public and private businesses and homes to ensure conditions exist where people can be healthy. HVHD uses education to inform the public and health practitioners on public health best practices, policy information, and the impacts and methods of prevention for the spread of communicable diseases. HVHD conducts outreach to engage their communities that experience obstacles in accessing the public health services they need, deliver vaccines to the community, and advocate for needed and beneficial health policies.

For more information about the Housatonic Valley Health District, call (203) 264-9616