To: Spalding, Curt[Spalding.Curt@epa.gov]; Szaro, Deb[Szaro.Deb@epa.gov]
From: Enck, Judith
Sent: Fri 2/26/2016 1:46:51 PM
Subject: Fwd: News Clips (PFOA)

See Vermont articles. Let me know if you need support. Lawyer contact for us is paul Simon Water contact is Joan Matthews. Staffer in my office who has s good overall handle on pfoa I'd pat EVANGELISTA.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Region2 PAD News <Region2_PAD_News@epa.gov>
Date: February 26, 2016 at 8:28:20 AM EST
To: "R2 EPA Region 2 (EPA Staff)" <R2_EPA_Region_2_EPA_Staff@epa.gov>
Subject: News Clips (PFOA)

Toxic chemical in 5 Vermont sites near New York site

ASSOCIATED PRESSS

FEB. 26, 2015

By WILSON RING

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A toxic chemical found to have contaminated the water system of an upstate New York village has been found in five locations in the nearby Vermont community of North Bennington, Gov. Peter Shumlin and other top officials said Thursday.

The contamination of the potentially cancer-causing chemical, known as PFOA, was found in water from private wells for three homes in North Bennington, a landscaping business and the non-potable water supply for a waste water treatment plant that were tested after Vermont officials heard news reports about the contamination found in nearby Hoosick Falls, New York.

The public water supply that serves North Bennington was tested, but no contamination was found in that system, officials said.

"We're going to obviously now test for private wells and public supplies in the region," Shumlin, a Democrat, said Thursday at a news conference called two hours after state officials received the test results showing the contamination.

Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, a producer of high-performance polymer products, owns the factory believed to be responsible for the contamination. The company, part of

Paris-based Saint-Gobain Corp., said it would pay for bottled water and filtering systems for the affected locations and any others that might be found in the future.

"We will cooperate with all local, state and federal officials as they investigate and manage this issue," it said in a statement.

The three residential wells, including at a home with children, showed a range of PFOA, or perfluorooctonaoic acid, of between 40 parts per trillion and 2,880 ppt. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set a non-enforceable short-term exposure limit of 400 ppt for PFOA in drinking water, and Vermont set its own standard at 20 ppt.

PFOA was used for decades in nonstick and stain-resistant coatings and hundreds of other products.

In December, the EPA told the 4,500 Hoosick Falls residents who use the village system to stop drinking the water. New York officials traced the contamination to the site of the village's largest employer, a factory acquired by Saint-Gobain, which is providing the free bottled water to village residents while a new filtration system is installed.

Vermont Health Commissioner Dr. Harry Chen said Thursday there had been no reports of anyone getting sick from the contamination. He said that in other settings, such as factories, long-term exposure to PFOA had been shown to cause a variety of health problems, including cancer.

Health officials will be working with people who were exposed and their medical providers. Vermont officials also are planning to meet with local residents over the next several days.

"We don't expect any acute health effects," Chen said. "I think the important thing is to both assess what the total exposure is, to ensure that people don't have ongoing exposure, (and) to share information about how an individual can get evaluated."

Elevated PFOA levels found in North Bennington, public water supply unaffected says Gov. Shumlin

Public water supply is not contaminated

By Keith Whitcomb Jr.

benningtonbanner.com

Posted: 02/25/2016

NORTH BENNINGTON, VT >> Five wells in North Bennington have tested positive for elevated levels of the same carcinogen that has contaminated the Hoosick Falls, N.Y. drinking water supply.

The village's public water supply, which is located two miles from the suspected source of

the contamination and serves 1,700 people, tested negative for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).

Three of the wells found to contain PFOA are for residences, while one supplies a landscaping company. The fifth well, which is not used for drinking, is at the North Bennington Wastewater Treatment Facility.

The findings were announced by Vermont Governor Peter Shumlin during a press conference in Montpelier Thursday morning, two hours after the results of testing were returned.

Shumlin said those affected have been notified and the state will immediately begin supplying them with bottled water and working to provide them with a long-term solution. He said there will be more tests and that anyone who feels their water, or they themselves, need to be tested for elevated levels of PFOA should contact Chuck Schwer, director of the Waste Management and Prevention Division of the Department of Environmental Conservation at 802-249-5324.

There will be a meeting Friday, 4 p.m. at the North Bennington Fire Station where DEC officials will be on hand to answer questions. State officials will also be in Bennington on Town Meeting Day to answer any more queries from the public.

Shumlin said it's believed that the source of the contamination is the former ChemFab plant, which operated at the H.C. White Mill complex at 940 and 1030 Water St. for over 30 years. ChemFab was purchased by the Saint-Gobain Corporation in 2000 and shut down in 2002.

The goal now is to determine if there is more contamination and to make sure people have clean water to drink, Shumlin said. Once that is done, Vermont will work with New York environmental officials handling the Hoosick Falls problem to determine the responsible parties.

His administration decided to have the North Bennington wells tested after the situation in Hoosick Falls was brought up by Bennington's legislative delegation.

The EPA has told Hoosick Falls, N.Y. residents not to drink the tap water because it contains PFOA, a man-made chemical once used to make nonstick cookware and to insulate wires. It's believed to have been used in the village's old factories for decades. It's also been linked to cancer, is the subject of numerous lawsuits alleging contamination and negligence, and many scientists and activists are calling for stricter regulation.

Its discovery led the state to declare part of the village a Superfund site, launch health studies and test private wells. The state identified Saint-Gobain and Honeywell International as the parties responsible for the contamination.

Saint-Gobain is paying for bottled water for residents and a filtration system.

Shumlin said the affected area in North Bennington is not densely populated and largely falls between the Papermill and Hendry bridges. He said more tests will be done to determine the scope of the elevated PFOA levels. The Walloomsac River will be tested as

well.

Dr. Harry Chen, commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health, said there are no acute dangers from PFOA. The problems, such as cancer and endocrine system issues, come from prolonged exposure to elevated levels. The harm comes from ingesting it, as it does not absorb well through skin.

Vermont standards say 20 parts per trillion of PFOA are considered acceptable. The wastewater treatment plant tested at 618 ppt and the landscaping business 168 ppt. The residential wells ranged from 40 to 2,880 ppt.The federal EPA's standard is 400 ppt. In Hoosick Falls, testing showed the village's water system serving some 4,900 people had up to 670 ppt. Underneath the Saint-Gobain site, where PFOA was likely used for decades, levels were up to 18,000 ppt.

This story will be updated.

WYNT

Cuomo on the progress in Hoosick Falls water crisis

Dan Bazile

Updated: 02/26/2016 1:31 AM

HOOSICK FALLS -- Filtered water is started flowing through the pipes in Hoosick Falls. But it could be a while before residents are given the go ahead to start using it.

"This weekend they're flushing the system. Then they're going to install the new filter," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

The system also has to be tested multiple times.

But it's not just the municipal water. People with private wells that tested positive for the toxic chemical PFOA are going through the same process. They're getting carbon filters paid for the state Superfund.

The state Department of Environmental Conservation and private contractors were at a home on Mahar Road for a new installation. The water from the well comes into the house, passes through two carbon filters and a UV light filter to kill bacteria before going into the home. The homeowner was given specific instructions on how to flush the system before drinking the water.

The governor says that's the short term solution.

"We're also looking for alternative water sources. There's a reservoir about 12 miles away. We're looking at the Hoosick River," Cuomo said.

Many residents feel the state should have responded quicker to the crisis. We asked the governor when the state Department of Health became aware of PFOA. He said we should ask the Department of Health. We told him they refused to answer our questions after three weeks.

"I'll talk to him about talking to you," Cuomo added.

We also asked the governor why he has not visited Hoosick Falls. He said he has a lot of boots on the ground like DOH and DEC. He said he plans to go after the permanent filter is installed.

TIME WARNER CABLE NEWS

Hoosick Falls Officials Now Pumping Water Through Filtration System

By Katie Eastman

Updated Thursday, February 25, 2016 at 10:58 PM EST

After several delays, officials in Hoosick Falls are now pumping water through their filtration system.

Now, village officials can begin flushing the municipal water supply to purge local water mains and hydrants of any contaminated water.

Hoosick Falls Mayor David Borge says water is flowing, but the Department of Health has not yet tested the water to see if the system is effectively reducing the potential cancer causing PFOA to safe levels.

Borge says a schedule for the sampling program is near completion. The mayor is warning residents that the EPA's recommendation to refrain from using the water for drinking and cooking remains in effect.

The completion of the filtration system comes a day after a federal class-action lawsuit was filed against the two companies the state says are responsible for contaminating the water.

Times Union Blog

In Q&A, Cuomo talks $15 wage, Hoosick Falls, ethics

By Casey Seiler, Capitol bureau chief on February 25, 2016 at 6:07 PM

…In the Q&A after, Cuomo was asked if he thinks the state should have acted quicker to address the PFOA contamination in the Hoosick Falls water supply.

“I don’t know that they could have,” he said. “You know, PFOA was not a regulated chemical. And then EPA just recently … changed the regulatory guidance on the (safe level of) parts per trillion. It went from like 400 parts per trillion to 100. At 400 parts per trillion, this virtually isn’t an issue anywhere in Hoosick Falls. When it goes down to 100, that’s when it changes. And that was literally in the middle of this (controversy).”

It was noted that EPA’s measure of 400 ppt was and remains in effect for only short-term exposure to PFOA. The agency only recently adopted 100 ppt as the safe level for long-term exposure such as years of normal residential water use.

“Well, you want to play semantics,” Cuomo said. ” … They didn’t have the 100 guidance, right? There was no level at 100 … they had just 400, and they added 100.”

WAMC

Class Action Suit In Hoosick Falls As Water Fears Spread Nearby

By LUCAS WILLARD • 15 HOURS AGO

Saint-Gobain's plant in Hoosick Falls

An environmental law firm has filed a class-action suit against two companies connected with the water contamination in the Rensselaer County village of Hoosick Falls. Meanwhile, neighboring communities are discovering the presence of the same chemical.

Since December, residents of Hoosick Falls have been instructed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to avoid drinking or cooking with contaminated tap water.

Now, after declaring the site a Superfund, state officials are investigating the McCaffrey Street facility now occupied by Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics. The industrial materials manufacturing facility previously was used by Honeywell International. Both companies used a chemical compound called PTFE, which contains PFOA, the chemical found in the village water supply and some private wells in the Town of Hoosick.

Environmental law firm Weitz & Luxenburg announced a class-action suit against Saint-Gobain and Honeywell Wednesday.

Robin Greenwald is head of the firm’s Environmental and Consumer Protection Unit…

“It is their activities that caused the PFOA to get into the environment. And it was their decision, their bad decision, that ended up causing the drinking water supply in Hoosick Falls to be contaminated.”

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of residents on the village water system and owners of private wells, accused Saint-Gobain and Honeywell of creating a “public health crisis.” Weitz & Luxenburg cites health complaints among local residents.

Chronic PFOA exposure is believed to lead to ill health effects including thyroid disease and various forms of cancer.

The companies responded to the lawsuit via email.

In a statement, Saint-Gobain said the company "respect[s] the right of individuals to pursue their claims in a court of law" and that the company will continue to investigate the source of the contamination. Saint-Gobain is paying for a filtration system for the village water supply.

A temporary filtration system began operating this week, but the village is still warning residents to continue using bottled water until further notice. A permanent filtration system for the municipal water supply is targeted for completion this fall.

Recently, Governor Andrew Cuomo's office pledged to provide residents of the Town of Hoosick and the Village of Hoosick Falls with a new water supply.

Honeywell says it is reviewing the lawsuit, and mentioned a letter sent to New York State Health Commissioner Howard Zucker earlier this month offering its "assistance to complement the testing being offered by agencies and the work done by Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics."

Honeywell says it is also reviewing the operations of another previous tenant of the McCaffrey Street building, AlliedSignal Laminated Systems. Honeywell claims AllidedSignal may have also used a compound containing PFOA. Honeywell also points out that state regulations did not previously require testing for PFOA.

In fact, it wasn't until after EPA came to town in January that state health and environmental officials classified the chemical as a hazardous substance.

Greenwald said it's very possible that other companies will be considered in the lawsuit.

"And that's what we'll learn during the course of the discovery in these cases; whether other parties should be added."

Weitz & Luxenburg, which is working with famed environmental advocate Erin Brockovich, says it also will expand its inquiry to neighboring Petersburgh, New York.

There, local officials are eagerly awaiting the return of further testing, after PFOA was detected in a well used by the town water district.

Town Supervisor Peter Schaaphok said the results from a test by the state Department of Health showed PFOA levels at 95 parts per trillion, just shy of the state's 100 ppt threshold.

"It's borderline whether we were going to require something or not. And my suspicion is that we are going to require some remedial action and I'm hoping that the state is here to support us on that," said Schaaphok.

The town is home to Taconic, an industrial products manufacturer that also uses the compound PTFE.

In a statement, Taconic said it “is in the process of conducting a site evaluation and has asked NYSDEC and NYSDOH for their guidance.” Meanwhile, the company is distributing bottled water to the 74 customers served by the municipal water supply.

Just over the state line from the Town of Hoosick, the public water supply for North Bennington, Vermont has also tested positive for PFOA. In Vermont, the standard level for the chemical is 20 ppt.

According to Governor Peter Shumlin’s office, levels above the threshold were found in a wastewater treatment plant well, a local business’ well, and three residential wells. One home tested showed levels at 2,880 ppt.

Public meetings to discuss the contamination are scheduled on Friday at the North Bennington Firehouse, and Monday during the Bennington Town Meeting Day.

Hoosick Falls carbon treatment system now operational

NEWS 10

By Lindsay Nielsen

February 25, 2016, 7:03 pm

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. — The newly installed carbon filtration system at the municipal water treatment plant in Hoosick Falls is fully operational.

Water has begun pumping through the system and into the village’s water distribution system.

“This is a major step forward,” Mayor David Borge said. “The State Department of Health informed the village that it recommended the new facility begin operating and delivering treated water to the distribution system. As a result, water began flowing through the carbon filtration system late Tuesday.”

The NYS DOH approved the system for use based on the results of bacteriological and inorganic contaminant sampling. The DOH has not, yet, sampled the treated water to determine if the carbon filtration system is effectively reducing PFOA to safe levels.

A schedule for the sampling program is near completion.

“I want to caution residents that EPA’s recommendation to refrain from using the municipal water for drinking and cooking still remains in effect,” Borge said. “It will likely take another few weeks for NYS DOH to conduct a rigorous sampling program to ensure the carbon filtration system is effectively removing PFOA from the water.”

Residents have been receiving free bottled water since the contamination was announced,

and they will continue using bottled water until the new system is completely up and running.

“We live in fear every day of living here and none of us should have to live in fear,” Lisa Tifft, of Hoosick Falls, said. “I need the delivery because I’m on disability. Can’t get anywhere to get anything.”

Tifft counts on “water angel” Michelle O’Leary, who started a grassroots volunteer effort to make sure those in need get water in Hoosick Falls.

“When she comes to our house and delivers our water, it’s just such a helpful thing, and we do appreciate everything she does,” Tifft said.

“Sometimes I feel like those considered the little people are kind of swept under the carpet and forgotten, so I felt like it was my duty to make sure they were taken care of,” O’Leary said.

The new system is almost completely ready, though residents will continue using bottled water.

“No, not at all,” O’Leary said. “I still am not thrilled about us even showering in it.”

Because so many village residents want to continue using bottled water, O’Leary must continue her efforts for many more months.

“Right now, I’m doing the best I can, but I kind of feel someone should take responsibility, and it shouldn’t be me forever because it’s going to be a long haul,” she said. “This is going on until October.”

O’Leary said she has put the word out to try and get some help.

“Part of me almost feels like it’s being taken for granted because someone else is doing it, so I don’t know,” she said. “I’ve tried to put the word out to get help.”

O’Leary also delivers important information.

“I work hard on trying to get information out to them because they don’t attend meetings,” she said. “They’re not on social media, so I always have a box of papers in my car, and I’m kind of their resource and eyes and ears between the village and what’s going on.”

O’Leary was supposed to meet with Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics on Thursday, but she is listed in a class action lawsuit against the company so she said the meeting was cancelled.

“They sent me an e-mail yesterday basically giving me their apologies and saying that they can’t really talk to me now since my name was mentioned,” she said.

A Saint-Gobain spokesperson sent the following statement on Thursday:

"We are deeply appreciative of the tireless community service of Michelle O'Leary and the Water Angles during this trying time. Since the lawsuit was filed yesterday, the meeting to discuss the water delivery and how we might help was postponed to enable Michelle the time to speak with her counsel. As noted to Michelle, this in no way diminishes our deep appreciation of her efforts. We are committed to continuing to explore ways to support the water delivery efforts in partnership with the Water Angels, the Mayor and the Village."

Village officials will begin flushing the municipal water supply to purge local water mains and hydrants of any PFOA-contaminated water residing in the pipes. Once approval for the flushing procedures is obtained by NYS DOH and NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, a schedule for flushing activities will be developed and shared with the public.

Granville test for PFOA in water comes back with good results

BILL TOSCANO

Post Star

Feb. 25

GRANVILLE

A test for the dangerous industrial chemical found in the water supply in Hoosick Falls came back to village of Granville officials Thursday morning, and the reading came in as "undetectable" for PFOA.

That means the water in Granville has fewer than 20 parts per trillion of the chemical. High levels of PFOA in drinking water have forced Hoosick Falls residents to use bottled water and spurred state investigations.

"We had a PFOA test performed as a precautionary measure, as we have a Saint-Gobain factory here in Granville, as Hoosick Falls does," said Village Clerk Rick Roberts. "Long and short, I am told that there are no concerns for Granville, and the sample was considered 'free of PFOA' to the smallest levels that the lab could measure to."

Dan Williams, the village's public works superintendent, said the results are as low as they can be.

"We don't use zero in the water industry, but 0.02 parts per billion is the lowest they can measure, and we are below that," Williams said. "We were told it is so low it cannot be detected."

Williams pointed out that Hoosick Falls is using parts per trillion as a measure, and the Granville measurement would be below 20 parts per trillion.

He said many water superintendents are testing more and for specific chemicals.

“All of us with factories in our districts are getting a little nervous,” he said. “So that’s why you see more testing.”

Granville is not the only local village having its water tested.

A sample taken Wednesday in Cambridge is on its way to Florida for PFOA testing. Cambridge Mayor Carman Bogle said she asked American Water, which provides the water in the village, to test for PFOAs because a number of residents had asked her about the issue.

American Water is paying for the test, which is being done at a private laboratory.

Patricia Hunt, director of Public Health for Washington County, said her department does not deal directly with environmental health, but rather refers questions to the state Department of Health.

“I know White Creek had some concerns, and we referred them to the state’s PFOA hotline,” she said.

PFOA, or perfluorooctonaoic acid, is used in some industrial processes, including the manufacture of Teflon. While the Saint-Gobain site in Hoosick Falls is at a factory previously used for that purpose, the processes at the Granville plant do not use the chemical.

The issue in Hoosick Falls is severe, and the state Department of Environmental Conservation has ordered Saint-Gobain and Honeywell International, which previously owned the factory there, to pay for cleanup of the Teflon-related chemical. There is also an ongoing lawsuit against the two companies.

The EPA told residents in Hoosick Falls to stop drinking municipal water in December, more than a year after contamination was found.

Groundwater under the Saint-Gobain plant near Hoosick Falls municipal wells tested at 18,000 parts per trillion, the company reported last year. Municipal and private wells have tested at levels above 400 parts per trillion.

Saint-Gobain has been providing residents with free bottled water and has volunteered to pay for a new carbon filtration system currently being installed to remove PFOA from the municipal water supply.

Residents in Petersburgh are being offered free bottled water “out of an abundance of caution” after traces of PFOA — much lower than those in nearby Hoosick Falls — were found in its water supply.

Other issues

The issues in Hoosick Falls and other towns have put local water systems in the spotlight, and have prompted Gov. Andrew Cuomo to create a new state Water Quality Rapid Response Team led by the state’s health and environmental commissioners.

The state has started water testing on Long Island for contamination from a toxic groundwater plume near a former military plane manufacturing plant. The monitoring, from six wells, will look for harmful chemicals associated with the plume, which emanates from a 600-acre property in Bethpage that housed the Grumman Aerospace Corp., the U.S. Navy and other industries. The plume is deep underground and is believed to be spreading, potentially posing a risk to the drinking water of nearby communities.

In addition, the drinking water sources in all buildings in the Ithaca City School District are being shut off after tests revealed high lead levels in the water at two schools.

The Ithaca Journal reported administrators posted a letter on the district's website Wednesday to announce that water is being shut off until all school buildings can be tested for lead and copper levels. Bottled water is being provided to students and staff.

Officials say high lead levels in water have been found at two elementary schools following three tests conducted since August. Officials say districtwide testing of the water hasn't been conducted since 2005.

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

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