Concerned citizens pack Hoosick Falls water hearing

EPA leader says action should be taken to find out about contamination

By Brendan J. Lyons Updated 7:26 am, Friday, January 15, 2016

Albany Times Union

Hoosick Falls

Residents in this factory village packed the high school Thursday night to learn more about a dangerous chemical that contaminated their water system and stoked fears about whether it's caused what many believe is a high rate of unusual and aggressive forms of cancer.

"I'm very, very sorry that you have been going through this," Judith Enck, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regional administrator, told the audience. "I'm sorry that we don't know how long you have been drinking contaminated water. ... No medical studies or surveys have been done in Hoosick Falls. Action should be taken to protect your health."

The focus of the contamination has been a Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics manufacturing plant. The small factory, the village's largest employer with about 125 workers, is on a hill overlooking the Hoosick River, about 400 yards from village well fields. The company owns a second plant in the village with about 75 workers.

The standing-room-only meeting took place hours after the state Department of Environmental Conservation and state Health Department jointly called on the EPA to add Saint-Gobain's McCaffrey Street plant "and other possible sources of contamination" in the village to the federal Superfund program and "undertake a full environmental investigation to address the sources of contamination."

Enck, who organized the informational meeting, has urged village leaders to warn residents to stop drinking the water and limit other exposure. Mayor David B. Borge had previously said it was a "personal choice" whether to consume the water, which comes from underground wells serving about 4,500 consumers.

Elevated levels of the toxic chemical, perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, were found in the system in 2014 by Michael Hickey, a former village trustee whose father died of cancer. Hickey sent water samples to a Canadian lab that reported levels of PFOA that the EPA later said are not safe for human consumption.

The audience applauded loudly when David Engel, a lawyer for a grassroots citizens group formed to help educate residents about the pollution, referred to Hickey as a "hero."

Saint-Gobain officials said there has been no determination on the source of the contamination, but the McCaffrey Street plant they bought in 1999 used PFOA for decades, and levels as high as 18,000 parts per trillion were found in the

groundwater under the plant. EPA's guideline is 400 PPT for short-term exposure, which many health officials and experts say is not strict enough.

"The use of PFOA in our facilities in the past was limited to small amounts that were present in some of the raw materials that were supplied to us by others," said Dina Silver Pokedoff, company spokeswoman. "In December 2014, we eliminated altogether the use of PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene) containing PFOA in our Hoosick Falls facility."

The firm's decision to stop using PFOA at its Hoosick Falls plants took place the same month that Saint-Gobain told the EPA that PFOA had been found in the public water system.

The state Health Department last month issued a fact sheet to residents downplaying the health risks of the toxic chemical. But Thursday, the state took a stronger stand and called on the EPA to set stricter standards on the acceptable levels of PFOA in drinking water. The state also said it would begin "an investigation of the incidence of cancer among village residents."

Hoosick Falls has had number of manufacturing plants dating to the early 1800s, including other plants that used PFOA or similar synthetic chemicals. In the last three months, the Times Union has interviewed current and former residents who suspect the drinking water may have caused cancer or other serious effects for themselves or relatives.

Sarah Armour, whose mother, Janice Marie Polacek, was born and raised here, told the Times Union her family was suspicious when Polacek, a non-smoker, died at 42 from brain cancer.

"She was only 39 years old when she began to have horrible headaches and dizzy spells," Armour said. "A CT scan of her brain showed a huge mass that turned out to be a metastasis from an extremely rare and aggressive form of cancer, carcinoma of the thymus. She underwent radiation, chemotherapy, and even a tumor debulking open chest surgery, but ultimately died ... I recall when she was first diagnosed, my father saying something about a plant near her childhood home that he suspected might have contributed to her unlikely development of cancer. Even back then, over 25 years ago, he knew something was not right about it."

The EPA's Enck said government agencies need to determine the source and extent of water pollution, including if it has contaminated private wells.

"A very detailed study of groundwater is needed in Hoosick Falls to know what we are dealing with and how to best address it," she told the audience. "There also needs to be sampling in the Hoosic River."

Dr. Marcus E. Martinez, who runs a family medical practice here, said he and his father, who opened the practice in 1956, have noted rare and aggressive forms of cancer in patients, as well as thyroid diseased and other health problems.

PFOA is a man-made chemical used to make non-stick and other household and commercial products that are heat-resistant and repel grease and water. Under a deal with the EPA, major PFOA makers began phasing out its use in 2006. PFOA exposure has been linked to increased health effects, including testicular and kidney cancer and thyroid disease.

Last week, village trustees voted to have temporary filters installed on the water system. A long-term plan to install a charcoal filter system expected to remove PFOA from the water is set to be done later this year. Saint-Gobain has offered to pay to install and maintain the filter, and has also paid for residents to get free water from a local supermarket.

Julia DiCorleto, a general manager who oversees Saint-Gobain's Hoosick Falls plants, said the soil-testing it did around the McCaffrey Street plant showed low levels of PFOA in the soil, which may indicate water pollution came from a source other than their plant. But the company's tests also showed extremely high levels of PFOA in the groundwater under the plant site, which includes an aquifer believed to feed the village's underground well system.

Saint-Gobain officials said their decision to help the village does not represent any acknowledgement of responsibility for the PFOA pollution.

A science panel formed as a result of class-action litigation in the Ohio Valley with DuPont, one of the primary manufacturers of PFOA, conducted a comprehensive study of the health effects of exposure and concluded the chemical has a "probable link" to six diseases: kidney cancer; testicular cancer; ulcerative colitis; thyroid disease; preeclampsia/pregnancy-induced hypertension; and medically diagnosed high cholesterol.

Last fall, one of the first cases to go to trial resulted in a $1.6 million judgment for a woman who lost a kidney attributed to PFOA exposure. Five other cases in the litigation may go to trail beginning this year.

Photos: Cindy Schultz

Image 1/15

Judith Enck, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator for Region 2, addresses questions on PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 2/15

High school senior Anna Wysocki, 17, poses her question about PFOA contamination in the water system during a public meeting on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 3/15

Residents attend a public meeting about PFOA contamination in the village's water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Photo: Cindy Schultz

Image 4/15

Suzanne DiDonato poses her question about PFOA contamination in the water system during a public meeting on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 5/15

Toxicologist Dr. Mark Maddaloni addresses questions on PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 6/15

Toxicologist Dr. Bob Michaels speaks during a public meeting to address PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 7/15

High school senior Jeff Brewer, 17, poses his question about PFOA contamination in the water system during a public meeting on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 8/15

Judith Enck, Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator for Region 2, center with microphone, addresses questions on PFOA contamination in the village of Hoosick Falls water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 9,10/15

Scores attend the EPA's informational hearing on the Hoosick Falls water system (Cindy Schultz/Times Union)

Image 11/15

A standing-room only audience attends a public meeting about PFOA contamination in the village's water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, at

Hoosick Falls Central School in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Photo: Cindy Schultz

The Hoosic River flows through the village where PFOA contamination is in the water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 13/15

Downtown where PFOA contamination is in the water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Image 14/15

Downtown where PFOA contamination is in the water system on Thursday, Jan. 14, 2016, in Hoosick Falls, N.Y. (Cindy Schultz / Times Union)

Hundreds gather at meeting to discuss contaminated Hoosick Falls water

News10.com

By Lindsay Nielsen Published: January 14, 2016, 9:54 pm Updated: January 15, 2016, 7:18 am

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. (NEWS10) – The people of Hoosick Falls expressed their concerns over contaminated water to environmental officials on Thursday.

“Could we have acted sooner and saved lives in Hoosick Falls?” high school senior Connor McCart wondered.

The municipal water in the Village of Hoosick Falls has tested positive for a chemical called PFOA. Samples near Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics showed levels were 45 times higher than what’s considered safe.

But whispers of contamination started years ago.

“I was, like, 6-years old, 7-years old, as a joke, ‘Don’t eat the fish out of the river because the water’s bad,'” McCart said.

On Thursday night, hundreds gathered for an informational meeting where Michael Hickey was dubbed a hero. His father died of kidney cancer three years ago. Suspicious, Hickey tracked down a lab and bought a special kit in 2014. The water test came back positive for PFOA.

“I also didn’t want to see anybody else go through what we went through,” Hickey

said.

Now the Environmental Protection Agency has recommended a temporary filtration system be put in place until a permanent one is completed in October. But a Hoosick Falls High School senior had another idea.

“What monetary aid can be given to the village to acquire a new water source such as contracting with Troy and the Tomahanock Reservoir or Bennington and their source, Morgan Springs?” she asked.

The EPA informed people that the journey is far from over.

“More private well sampling is still needed in the area,” EPA Regional Director Judith Enck said. “A study needs to be done to investigate the nature and the extent of the contamination and to identify all of the sources of the contamination,” she said.

PFOA is believed to cause cancers and other illnesses.

Dr. Marcus Martinez organized the meeting because he believes cancer in the village is linked to the contamination.

The New York State Department of Health will be looking at cancer rates. The department is encouraging residents to participate in blood testing to identify levels of PFOA.

wnyt.com

EPA addresses concerns about contaminated water in Hoosick Falls

Anna Meiler

Updated: 01/15/2016 4:26 AM

Created: 01/14/2016 5:38 PM

HOOSICK FALLS - Hundreds of people in Hoosick Falls packed an auditorium Thursday night as the EPA explained the water they've been drinking has a cancer-causing chemical in it.

The EPA says they don't know for how long or at what level the water has been contaminated, but it very well could be years, even decades. And they may have never found out if it wasn't for one man who decided to test the water himself.

When John Hickey died from kidney cancer in 2013, his son Michael started searching for answers.

“It’s always been stated around here that we seem to have a high rate of cancer,” said Hickey.

He took it upon himself to take samples of the municipal water. Test results showed high levels of a manufactured chemical called PFOA. The EPA says more than 400 parts per trillion is unsafe to consume. Tests in Hoosick Falls showed more than 600 parts per trillion in the water.

“One sample came back at 18,000 parts per trillion. So, that led the EPA to make a very clear, strong public statement they should not drink the water,” said Judith Enck with the EPA.

The EPA says the contamination is linked to the Saint Gobain plant where Michael’s dad worked for thirty years.

Dr. Marcus Martinez says PFOA can cause kidney and liver cancers and can have reproductive and developmental effects.

“Birth defects, cranial facial deficits have been reported as far as cleft lip, cleft pallet," said Dr. Martinez.

For Dr. Martinez, raising awareness of this problem has become a personal battle.

“I was diagnosed with cancer last year so it's changed my life a lot,” he said.

It's because of Michael Hickey and Dr. Martinez the EPA is taking action, informing hundreds of people how to protect themselves. They say to drink and cook with bottled water.

“We’re brushing our teeth with bottled water, cleaning with bottled water,” said village resident, McKenzie Bradley.

But, the EPA says bathing shouldn't be a big concern for most people.

“For children or people with rashes or abrasions they should take really short showers and really short baths and crack the window open,” said Enck.

Michael wishes his community knew about this years ago, but Dr. Martinez says he's a hero for future generations.

“For all the lives that may be saved going forward he's responsible for all that,” he said.

The EPA is launching an investigation to find the source of the contamination which they say could take many years.

A temporary filtration system will be installed by the end of next month, but until then people need to continue using bottled water for drinking and cooking. Every

resident can receive five gallons of free bottled water a day. It's important to stress that boiling the tap water will not make it safer.

The law firm Weitz and Luxenberg had representatives at the meeting. They're teaming up with famed environmentalist Erin Brockovich to possibly pursue legal action on behalf of those residents.

Time Warner News

EPA Addresses Potentially Harmful Chemical in Hoosick Falls Water Supply

By Tanja Rekhi

Thursday, January 14, 2016 at 11:22 PM EST

It was standing room only, just minutes into a meeting Hoosick Falls residents have anticipated for months.

"As a mother, I can only imagine what it's been like for all the parents in this community," EPA regional administrator Judith Enck said.

Some questions were finally answered after amounts of perfluorooctanoic acid, otherwise known as PFOA, above the acceptable amount were found in village drinking water.

"There was a comprehensive study done of about 70,000 people who drank PFOA-contaminated water for about a year," Enck said, "and the study showed elevated levels of certain types of cancers, thyroid disease, problems with pregnancy."

While state agencies don't know where the man-made chemical found in non-stick pans, carpets and fire fighting foam is coming from, four times the acceptable amount have been found in the ground water at the Saint Gobain plant. Several other locations are over the limit as well.

"We don't know how long people have been drinking contaminated water, and we don't know what the levels were," Enck said.

Saint Gobain has been paying for residents to pick up five gallons of water a day at Tops Market, but some say that isn't enough.

"Some of these families are just too big and they need more," resident Brian LaPoint said, "because, I mean, now they're saying you're not even supposed to bathe in it."

The EPA says the water isn't safe to drink, cook or brush teeth with. They recommend taking quick showers with the windows cracked open.

"The EPA has recommended that senior citizens, or people with disabilities who can't get out to the market every day and pick up their five gallons of water, should have bottled water delivered to their home," Enck said.

State agencies will be gathering blood samples and studying cancer rates while Saint Gobain pays for a filtration system, but a long-term fix will take years -- and many hope it isn't too late.

"Ever since hearing about the tainted water, it just leaves me to believe, you know, am I one of those people who is starting to have onset symptoms of drinking the water?" LaPoint asked.

People with private wells can get them tested for PFOA by the State Department of Health by emailing beei@health.ny.gov or calling 518-402-7860. For more information, log on to www.EPA.gov/aboutEPA/Hoosick-Falls-water-contamination.

Times Union

State wants Hoosick Falls site on federal Superfund list; water meeting is tonight

Updated 4:45 pm, Thursday, January 14, 2016

HOOSICK FALLS — The Environmental Protection Agency hosts a meeting tonight to hear community concerns about Hoosick Falls' drinking water.

The meeting begins at 6 p.m. at the Hoosick Falls High School auditorium on Route 22.

Environmental Protection Agency Regional Administrator Judith Enck will speak at the forum hosted by Healthy Hoosick Water.

Enck, EPA staff, and others also will share information and answer questions, as the EPA continues to gather information on the perfluorooctanoic acid contamination of the drinking water supply.

In a development late this afternoon, the state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health want the EPA to add the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. plant and other possible sources of contamination in Hoosick Falls to the National Priorities List under the federal Superfund program and investigate contamination sources.

Times Union

DOH, DEC asks EPA to take action on Hoosick Falls water

By Casey Seiler, Capitol bureau chief on January 14, 2016 at 5:25 PM

The state departments of Environmental Conservation and Health want the federal Environmental Protection Agency to add the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corp. plant and other possible sources of contamination in Hoosick Falls to the National Priorities List under the federal Superfund program, and investigate contamination sources.

As the TU's Brendan Lyons reported as part of a series of stories on the situation in Hoosick Falls, the EPA last month issued a statement warning residents not to drink or cook with village water because of elevated levels of a toxic chemical, perfluorooctanoic acid or "PFOA," that was used since the 1940s to manufacture industrial and household products such as non-stick coatings and heat-resistant wiring — including at a factory near the village water treatment plant.

The state Health Department only recently changed its stance on the safety of the village's water: In early December, DOH handed out a "fact sheet" to residents stating "health effects are not expected to occur from normal use of the water."

Researchers say a "probable link" exists between PFOA and a range of ailments in humans, including various types of cancer.

The release from the two state agencies came out less than two hours before EPA was scheduled to hold a town meeting with the community.

The full release from the state agencies, which oddly does not mention DOH's recent turnaround in its assessment of the water's safety:

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) today called on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to add the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corporation McCaffrey Street Plant and other possible sources of contamination in Hoosick Falls to the National Priorities List (NPL) under the federal Superfund program and to undertake a full environmental investigation to address the sources of contamination. In addition, the state, Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corporation and the Village of Hoosick Falls (Village) are collaboratively working on an agreement to install water treatment systems to remove hazardous chemicals from the Village's water supply. To view the state's letters, click here and here.

Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said, "As soon as the Department of Health was notified of the contamination, we immediately began working with all parties in a collaborative manner to gather more data on the problem and work on solutions to reduce people's exposure to PFOA. I look forward to working with DEC, EPA and the Village of Hoosick Falls to address the sources of contamination."

Acting DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said, “It is imperative that all levels of government work collaboratively to protect public health and the environment in situations such as this. DOH is working to develop a long-term solution for the Village’s public water supply and we must ensure the extent of contamination is identified and cleaned up. I urge the EPA to take vigorous action on the federal level to regulate PFOA and quickly add this site to the National Priorities List so the resources of the federal Superfund program can be used to advance these next steps.”

State Calls for National Priorities Listing & Urges Federal Action on PFOA

NPL listing permits EPA to use the resources of the federal Superfund to investigate and clean up hazardous substances. Listing also enables EPA to issue an order requiring a responsible party or parties to clean up the site if that becomes necessary. The source, or sources, of PFOA to the Village’s public water system has not been confirmed. Through the federal Superfund program, all potential sources and responsible parties will be evaluated.

The state also called on the EPA to take stronger national actions to address Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) contamination. In a letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy, DEC and DOH requested that EPA lower its health advisory for PFOA in drinking water to take into account the most current scientific evidence and adopt a protective maximum contaminant level. This letter also called upon EPA to expeditiously list PFOA as a hazardous substance under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) to facilitate the cleanup of contaminated groundwater and other media. Further, the letter asks EPA to review the remaining uses of PFOA under the Toxic Substance Control Act and curtail them whenever less toxic alternatives are available.

DOH Continues to Monitor Water to Ensure Public Health Safety

PFOA was detected in the Village’s public drinking water in 2014. Although the use of PFOA is being phased out, it is still used to make household and commercial products that resist heat, and repel oil, stains, grease, and water. This includes nonstick cookware, surface coatings for stain-resistant carpets and fabric, and paper and cardboard food packaging. Studies of people have associated exposure to PFOA with an increased risk for several health effects. This includes associations with effects on the liver, immune system, thyroid gland, cholesterol levels, blood pressure during pregnancy, and kidney and testicular cancer.

After PFOA was detected in the water supply, DOH worked closely with the Village to provide technical advice and assistance for water sampling and to evaluate water treatment options to eliminate health risks. Because the levels of PFOA in public water were higher than the EPA health advisory level, DOH determined that people should reduce their exposure by avoiding the use of tap water for drinking and cooking. In addition, DOH continues to monitor private wells and will have more results very soon.

State Undertakes Cancer Registry & Biomonitoring Studies

In response to public concern, DOH has also begun an investigation of the incidence of cancer among Village residents, using data from the DOH Cancer Registry. The agency will also offer a PFOA biomonitoring study for residents of the Hoosick Falls area. This study will measure PFOA in blood to provide information on exposure. Detailed information about the project will be shared with area residents prior to the start of the project.

DOH will continue to provide technical advice and assistance to the Village, to protect the health of the affected residents. The agency has been testing water samples since first notified of the contamination, and will continue to test private wells.

Looking down on Carey Ave. the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics plant is seen in the background in Hoosick Falls. (Paul Buckowski / Times Union)

BENNINGTON BANNER

State calls on EPA to list Saint-Gobain, other Hoosick Falls, NY sites on Superfund list

State wants EPA to list Saint-Gobain at a Superfund site

By Edward Damon

Posted: 01/14/2016 05:53:54 PM EST

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. >> Two state agencies have asked the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics site, a potential source of a chemical that has contaminated the village's water supply, be among those added to the National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund sites.

The state has also called on the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to lower the health advisory for the chemical, which has been linked to cancer and other diseases, and announced health officials will study cancer rates in the village and surrounding area.

The joint announcement, made by the state's Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) Thursday afternoon, is the latest among efforts to address Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), a manmade, toxic chemical once used to make non-stick coatings.

It also came just hours before a well-attended meeting in the village, hosted by local group Healthy Hoosick Water.

"A very detailed study of groundwater is needed in Hoosick Falls to know what we are dealing with and how to best address it," Judith Enck, regional administrator of EPA Region II, told a standing-room only crowd of hundreds in

the high school auditorium.

Such an effort would take years, she said, but in the meantime, "providing safe drinking water has to be taken care of immediately."

Residents should not drink the tapwater, Enck said, until a solution is in place.

Officials say a granulated activated carbon (GAC) filter would bring the chemical "below detactable levels." A temporary filter is expected to be online by Februrary, and a "permentant" filter by October.

Saint-Gobain has agreed to fund both projects and to continue paying for bottled water at the local Tops Friendly Market.

Enck said those who need more than five gallons a day should contact the village. She also said the company will pay to deliver water to seniors, people with disabilities and others who need it.

Residents packed the municipal building's meeting chambers Tuesday where they peppered village board members with questions. Among them, whether new wells should replace the three which lie some 500 yards from the Saint-Gobain site, where PFOA samples were 40 times greater than the EPA's recommended levels of 400 parts per trillion.

Enck told attendees that a full investigationis needed to determine the full extent of the PFOA "plume" in the groundwater.

Enck said the EPA doesn't believe PFOA, which is no longer used, was manufactured in the village. But the chemical was a component of the PTFE once used at 14 McCaffrey St. and 1 Liberty St.. Both are currently owned by the Saint-Gobain Corporation and Enck said, "it's quite possible other facilities in Hoosick Falls used it as well."

Eugene Leff, deputy commissioner of the state DEC, said the request to the EPA is the first step in starting a cleanup.

"Ultimately, the vast resources of the Superfund will be available," he said.

Walter Mugdan, the EPA's regional superfund director, said "an initial sampling program" would begin in a couple of months. It's a necessary step to support the site's inclusion among the 1,800 Superfund sites across the country. A final study would determine whether there are other contaminants in the water, where the water is going from and how it's spreading.

"Based on that, we'll have to look at how we will remediate this," he said. That multi-year process could mean cleaning up the water, stopping the plume from spreading or a combination of both, he said.

Nathan Graber, director of the Center for Environmental Health said his department will continue to test residents' private wells and other local water

systems.

His department will also conduct a study to examine PFOA levels in residents' blood, he said. And in response to concerns of increased rates of cancer, the department will delve deep into the state cancer registry to look at rates between 1995 to 2012, the most recent year the data is complete.

Numerous other questions were raised Thursday and speakers acknowledged the science is still developing. It's not clear whether the EPA's level is low enough.

"The EPA does not believe that skin contact with PFOA contaminated water is significant exposure," Enck said. But children or those with skin conditions, such as rashes, cuts and abrasions, should avoid long showers and baths.

"As the government agencies charged with protecting public health and the environment, it is imperative that DOH, the [DEC], and the EPA work together on a full investigation of the nature and extent of PFOA contamination and, then, on any necessary cleanup," Basil Seggos, acting DEC commissioner, wrote in a letter Thursday to Enck.

The DEC and DOH have asked the EPA to "expeditiously list PFOA as a hazardous substance."

"We write to you because this is not just a local issue," Seggos and DOH Commissioner Howard Zucker wrote in a letter to EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "The presence of PFOA in drinking water is an emerging nation-wide issue."

The letter refers to studies which suggest "the presence of PFOA in drinking water and groundwater may be more pervasive than originally thought and may subject people across the country to PFOA exposure."

"It's important that you stay informed and involved," Enck told attendees in her closing remarks. "Government needs to be transparent and responsive... [The EPA] will answer your questions, and quite frankly, we will tell you when we don't have the answers."

The EPA and Village websites have dedicated sections to the water issue with fact sheets, numbers residents should call to arrange private well testing and other information: www.epa.gov/aboutepa/hoosick-falls-water-contamination and www.villageofhoosickfalls.com/water.

NY NEWS RELEASE

New York State Announces Progress to Address Contamination at Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Site and in Village Water Supply

January 15, 2016

by RealEstateRama

Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health urge EPA to take steps to address water contamination and advance cleanup of the area

In response to public concern, DOH Conducting Cancer & Biomonitoring Study in Hoosick Falls

New York, NY – January 15, 2015 – (RealEstateRama) — The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Department of Health (DOH) today called on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to add the Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corporation McCaffrey Street Plant and other possible sources of contamination in Hoosick Falls to the National Priorities List (NPL) under the federal Superfund program and to undertake a full environmental investigation to address the sources of contamination. In addition, the state, Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics Corporation and the Village of Hoosick Falls (Village) are collaboratively working on an agreement to install water treatment systems to remove hazardous chemicals from the Village's water supply. View the state's letters to Regional EPA Administrator Judith Enck (PDF, 78 KB) and EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy (PDF, 55 KB).

Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said, "As soon as the Department of Health was notified of the contamination, we immediately began working with all parties in a collaborative manner to gather more data on the problem and work on solutions to reduce people's exposure to PFOA. I look forward to working with DEC, EPA and the Village of Hoosick Falls to address the sources of contamination."

Acting DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said, "It is imperative that all levels of government work collaboratively to protect public health and the environment in situations such as this. DOH is working to develop a long-term solution for the Village's public water supply and we must ensure the extent of contamination is identified and cleaned up. I urge the EPA to take vigorous action on the federal level to regulate PFOA and quickly add this site to the National Priorities List so the resources of the federal Superfund program can be used to advance these next steps."

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The state also called on the EPA to take stronger national actions to address Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) contamination. In a letter to EPA Administrator

Gina McCarthy (PDF, 55 KB), DEC and DOH requested that EPA lower its health advisory for PFOA in drinking water to take into account the most current scientific evidence and adopt a protective maximum contaminant level. This letter also called upon EPA to expeditiously list PFOA as a hazardous substance under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) to facilitate the cleanup of contaminated groundwater and other media. Further, the letter asks EPA to review the remaining uses of PFOA under the Toxic Substance Control Act and curtail them whenever less toxic alternatives are available.

DOH Continues to Monitor Water to Ensure Public Health Safety

PFOA was detected in the Village's public drinking water in 2014. Although the use of PFOA is being phased out, it is still used to make household and commercial products that resist heat, and repel oil, stains, grease, and water. This includes nonstick cookware, surface coatings for stain-resistant carpets and fabric, and paper and cardboard food packaging. Studies of people have associated exposure to PFOA with an increased risk for several health effects. This includes associations with effects on the liver, immune system, thyroid gland, cholesterol levels, blood pressure during pregnancy, and kidney and testicular cancer.

After PFOA was detected in the water supply, DOH worked closely with the Village to provide technical advice and assistance for water sampling and to evaluate water treatment options to eliminate health risks. Because the levels of PFOA in public water were higher than the EPA health advisory level, DOH determined that people should reduce their exposure by avoiding the use of tap water for drinking and cooking. In addition, DOH continues to monitor private wells and will have more results very soon.

State Undertakes Cancer Registry & Biomonitoring Studies

In response to public concern, DOH has also begun an investigation of the incidence of cancer among Village residents, using data from the DOH Cancer Registry. The agency will also offer a PFOA biomonitoring study for residents of the Hoosick Falls area. This study will measure PFOA in blood to provide information on exposure. Detailed information about the project will be shared with area residents prior to the start of the project.

DOH will continue to provide technical advice and assistance to the Village, to protect the health of the affected residents. The agency has been testing water samples since first notified of the contamination, and will continue to test private wells.

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- See more at: http://newyork.realestaterama.com/2016/01/15/new-york-state-announces-progress-to-address-contamination-at-saint-gobain-performance-plastics-site-and-in-village-water-supply-ID03989.html#sthash.Bdk0sKMX.dpuf

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