

MDEQ: Creosote found, no danger

April 8, 2010

Creosote residue has been found in South Hattiesburg, according to officials with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality. But officials say residents are not at risk because of it.

MDEQ collected samples at the end of January and the middle of February around the Gulf States Creosote site and Gordon's Creek. Low levels of creosote compounds were found in some of the samples.

In a letter, dated April 5, to Hattiesburg Mayor Johnny DuPree, MDEQ reports the results show "there is no risk to human health or the environment."

MDEQ officials said they are requiring water samples to be collected from Gordon's Creek on a periodic basis as a precautionary measure.

Tronox also is required to remove minor amounts of creosote out of wells on a quarterly basis, as outlined in the remedial action plan approved in 2002.

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MDEQ: Creosote residue found doesn't pose threat

Terry L. Jones • American Staff Writer
tjones@hattiesburgamerican.com • February 26, 2010

Officials have confirmed creosote residue has been found again in South Hattiesburg, but they say residents are not at risk because of it.

These latest findings are the result of a Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality study that was launched in December after community members reported seeing a rust-colored residue leaking from a monitoring well near a portion of Gordon's Creek.

The area in question is the former site of a creosote plant that closed in 1962.

The "chemical stains" were actually discovered in September by residents in the area and members of the Forrest County Environmental Support Team.

FCEST leader Sherri Jones placed a 911 call on Dec. 23 after additional leaking was discovered and no official word had been received yet from MDEQ concerning the grassroots organization's first complaint.

FCEST members were quick to say they believed the substance was creosote and used the discovery as evidence the area was still under an environmental threat.

In a letter Thursday to Mayor Johnny DuPree, MDEQ officials said samples collected at the end of December through the middle of February confirmed the presence of compounds associated with creosote.

But, "we are confident that there is no risk to human health or to the environment at this site," the letter states.

Those sentiments were echoed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last month during a community meeting.

But Tennie White - president of Troubleshooters Inc., the Jackson environmental firm that has been

consulting FCEST on the matter - said MDEQ's results are riddled with questions that prove otherwise.

White noted that, according to the MDEQ results, samples taken at the site in December contained 410 milligrams per kilogram of naphthalene, a volatile hydrocarbon she said has a target cleanup level of 247 milligrams per kilogram.

"If it's over cleanup levels, how is it protective?" White said. "Their own data indicates there is a problem.

"As soon as somebody answers that I will be alright. I'm going to be fairly certain they cannot," she said.

MDEQ Communications Director Robbie Wilbur said in a release Thursday that as a precautionary measure, the site is still being periodically monitored due to the concerns from the residents.

"MDEQ is requiring surface water samples to be collected from Gordon's Creek on a periodic basis to ensure creosote does not adversely impact the creek in the future," Wilbur said. "MDEQ will continue to require Tronox to remove minor amounts of creosote out of wells on a quarterly basis, as outlined in the remedial action plan that was approved in 2002."

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January 15, 2010

No threat discovered, EPA says

Terry L. Jones

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Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency said Thursday that the South Hattiesburg neighborhood residents are convinced poses an environmental hazard doesn't actually harbor a threat at all.

That news didn't sit well with the swarms of residents - who formed a grassroots organization called the Forrest County Environmental Support Team - who believe further testing would prove otherwise.

FCEST met with officials from the EPA and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality Thursday night at the request of Mayor Johnny DuPree.

DuPree asked the environmental officials to meet with the group due to recent concerns that have surfaced at the former site of the creosote plant, along West Pine Street, that closed in 1962.

FCEST also wanted answers about conflicting claims that have been brought to light concerning an environmental study performed by a firm the city hired to assess the neighborhood.

"At the end of the day, what everyone in the room is concerned about is protectiveness - whether or not it's a (safe) environment," EPA representative Franklin Hill told the crowd during the meeting. "The main goal is to make it protective and close out all exposure, and MDEQ has done that."

About 13,000 tons of contaminated soil was removed from the affected areas by MDEQ in 2003 as part of the settlement in a multi-million dollar lawsuit.

But questions surrounding whether a monitoring well, along Gordon's Creek, that was identified last month as a potential threat because of a rust-colored residue seen leaking from its lid still went unanswered Thursday.

Hill said the EPA would have to analyze the data from samples it collected earlier that day before he could give residents a confident answer on what the residue was.

Group members became agitated with Hill's responses because they were under the impression data had already been collected at the well.

"We're paying MDEQ these millions of dollars and its pitiful we can't do the right thing about this community and these poisons," FCEST member Ivory Walman said. "Get somebody here that's going to be sensitive to the citizens that are paying them."

EPA officials did say Thursday that the environmental testing performed by Apex Environmental Consultants did raise concerns for them because there had not been enough planning involved in the data collection - among other things.

But officials said they didn't find any shortcomings in the report's lab results or sampling protocol.

"Here's where we are," Hill said. "We just need to sit down and work out the issues. I don't think MDEQ is afraid to talk about the data."

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County requests investigation of Hattiesburg's possible creosote problem

Posted: Aug 31, 2009 4:25 PM CDT

Updated: Aug 31, 2009 4:38 PM CDT

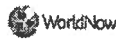
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HATTIESBURG, MS (WDAM) - The Forrest County Board of Supervisors is asking the Attorney General's office to look in to Hattiesburg's east side and a possible creosote contamination.

The board approved a measure last week to send a letter to the AG's office after the Forrest County Environment Support Team requested it be done.

Members of the group say the land near the former Gulf States Creosote facility is contaminated and are asking for proper remediation and an inquiry into previous settlements which allegedly excluded residents in the area.

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