



Sunset Avenue Site Drinking Water Investigation

Office of Land Quality – Federal Programs Section – Site Investigation Program

317-232-3220 • 800-451-6027

idem.IN.gov

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

Background Information:

- In 2009, a drinking water sample collected from a residential well on Sunset Avenue was found to be contaminated with low levels of vinyl chloride. Subsequent sampling by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) found several residences in the area with low levels of vinyl chloride, tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and cis-1,2-dichloroethene (cis-1,2-DCE) in their drinking water. Many other residential wells in the area did not show any detections of these contaminants. All but one sample collected from these residences were below the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). The MCL is a safe drinking water limit established by the U.S. EPA under the Safe Drinking Water Act.
- Vinyl chloride, PCE, and cis-1,2-DCE are volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOCs are man-made chemicals often used in industrial settings. PCE is a metal degreasing product and was also used in dry cleaning. Cis-1,2-DCE is used to make other chemicals in industry. Both cis-1,2-DCE and vinyl chloride are breakdown products of PCE.
- The Elkhart Public Works and Utilities currently provides drinking water to over 46,000 residents from three wellfields (North Main Street, Northwest, and South Wellfields). The North Main Street Wellfield is approximately one mile from the Sunset Avenue area. The North Main Street Wellfield was placed on the U.S. EPA National Priority List in 1983 due to VOC contamination from sources near the wellfield. The City currently treats the water from this wellfield to ensure that the water provided to its residents is safe for use. Elkhart's current drinking water has been tested and does not exceed the drinking water MCL for any of the VOCs of concern. It is unlikely that the contamination in the Sunset Avenue area is impacting the city's wellfield.
- Under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA, IDEM's Site Investigation Program will conduct a Site Reassessment which will consist of sampling the residential wells that have previously been impacted to determine if there is any contamination present in those wells.

Next Steps:

- During the summer of 2026, IDEM's Site Investigation Program will conduct a groundwater investigation in Elkhart to determine if any residences utilizing private drinking water wells that previously showed low levels of contamination still have contamination present.
- IDEM is requesting access to specific private properties to collect groundwater from residential wells to aid this investigation.
 - Property owners who are asked to aid in this investigation will be asked to sign a property access agreement.
 - The sampling will be done at no cost to the property owner.
 - IDEM will provide the property owners with their groundwater sampling results at no cost.

Environmental and Health Impacts:

- Some residences in the area remain on private wells and could be impacted. The municipal water currently being delivered by the City of Elkhart to homes remains safe for use.
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has classified several VOCs as known human carcinogens.
- People can be exposed to VOCs from ingesting contaminated water or by breathing gases released from contaminated water.

Additional Information:

- The public may direct questions and concerns regarding IDEM's environmental investigation in the Elkhart area, including additional information on sampling results to date, environmental impacts of VOCs, and potential drinking water impacts, to IDEM Project Manager Dan Chesterson at 317-233-7528; toll free at 800-451-6027 or by e-mail at dchester@idem.IN.gov.
- Questions and concerns about health-related impacts should be directed to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at 312-886-1462 or to the Elkhart County Health Department at 574-971-4600.
- Along with this fact sheet, IDEM is distributing *ToxFAQs*™ fact sheets from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry that describes the VOCs and their effects in greater detail. These can also be accessed electronically on the [ATSDR website](#).
- For additional information on the Safe Drinking Water Act, visit U.S. EPA's website at epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act.
- For information about IDEM's Site Investigation Program, visit IDEM's website at idem.IN.gov/cleanups/investigation-and-cleanup-programs/site-investigation.
- The news media may contact IDEM's media department, at 317-232-8596 or by e-mail at media@idem.IN.gov.