

EPA to give homes new water service

70 homes will be hooked to public lines. Chemicals at a naval center may have tainted wells.

By Kathryn Quigley
INQUIRER CORRESPONDENT

The federal Environmental Protection Agency announced yesterday that it will install public water lines in Warminster and Upper Southampton homes whose private wells are contaminated with dangerous chemicals.

EPA officials said at a news conference that leaking Superfund sites at the Naval Air Warfare Center in Warminster, Bucks County, could be partially responsible for the contamination.

Greg Crystall, chief of the EPA's Emergency Response Section, said 70 homes will be hooked up to public water within a year.

"We think they're [the Navy] a potential source of contamination," Crystall said. However, the ultimate responsibility may never be determined, he said.

The water lines will be installed to 40 homes that have contaminated wells and about 30 other homes nearby that the EPA considers in jeopardy, Crystall said. He estimated installation will cost \$1.5 million, which will come from federal money allocated to clean up Superfund sites.

In late 1992, tests showed that

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WATER from 81 chemicals from Superfund sites at the Naval base had contaminated the groundwater. The Navy was ordered by the EPA to test wells within a 3,000-foot radius of the sites.

Since April, 230 wells have been tested by the Navy's contractor, Halliburton NUS of Wayne. According to Halliburton engineer Neil Temerson, at least 40 wells are contaminated with solvents, including suspected cancer-causing chemicals trichloroethene (TCE) and tetrachloroethene (PCE).

The EPA's limits for both TCE and PCE in drinking water is five parts per billion. Some of the contaminated wells have tested as high as 420 parts per billion of PCE and 720 parts per billion of TCE, he said.

The Navy held public meetings at the base on May 10 and June 22 to discuss the contamination. At those meetings, hundreds of residents told Navy and EPA officials that they wanted to be hooked up to municipal water lines.

The EPA will pay for the installation of water lines as well as the connections to each home, Crystall said.

The EPA, and not the Navy, is funding the water line installation because "they can get it done quicker," said Conrad J. Mayer, a civilian engineer for the Navy's Northern Division.

The Navy will reimburse the EPA for the water lines, Crystall said, and also will continue to monitor water filtration systems that were installed temporarily in homes with contaminated wells.

"The Navy is being very responsible and pro-active in this," Crystall said.

The Army Corps of Engineers will do the design work, he said, in conjunction with municipal authorities in Upper Southampton and Warminster. The actual construction of the water lines will be put out to bid, he said.

The lines could be extended beyond the 70 homes if more contamination is found at a later date, he



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Greg Crystall, chief of the EPA's Emergency Response Section, said the cost of installation would be an estimated \$1.5 million

said. "If [the contamination] extends all the way to Pittsburgh, we'll put in a water line to Pittsburgh," Crystall said.

Eight dump sites and burn pits at the naval base were placed on the EPA's National Priority List of Super-

fund sites in 1989. The Navy has created a \$13 million cleanup plan of the shallow groundwater within the sites.

Most of the naval base's operations are set to move to Patuxent, Md., by 1997. But the Navy's Northern Division will continue the cleanup of the Superfund sites, even after most of the workers are gone, Navy officials said.

The news that the EPA will install public water lines came as a relief to Warminster residents.

"That's what we wanted all along," Grace Martin said yesterday. Martin started a petition in May — while she was nine months' pregnant with her second child — to get her Casey Village neighborhood hooked up to public water after she found out her well was contaminated

