

Neighbors Bucks County

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Authority sues Navy to recover treatment costs on well

The Warminster agency is seeking \$1.75 million. It blames contamination on the nearby NAWC.

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The Warminster Township Municipal Authority filed a \$1.75 million suit against the Navy in federal court last week in an attempt to recover costs to treat a well that the authority contends was contaminated by the Naval Air Warfare Center

The authority, which filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia on Tuesday, has known since 1979 that Well 26, located 2,000 feet

north of the base on Ivyland Road, was contaminated with chemicals suspected to cause cancer.

In 1993, the federal Environmental Protection Agency ordered the Navy to check 189 groundwater wells for contamination at homes within 3,000 feet of the naval center. In 1989, eight sites at the NAWC were placed on the EPA's Superfund National Priorities List.

The authority claims in its suit that the chemicals from those eight

sites, which were used as burn pits, waste-disposal areas and firefighter-training areas, contaminated Well 26.

The well was taken out of service in 1979, when authority officials first discovered excess levels of tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, chemicals suspected to cause cancer, a spokesman with the state Department of Environmental Resources said.

The authority began using the well again in 1985 after a treatment and monitoring system was installed for \$1.2 million, the lawsuit states. The lawsuit also states that the authority

expects to spend more than \$500,000 to maintain the systems for the next 32 years.

Rob Goldberg, a DER spokesman, said the Navy is investigating the well to determine whether the contamination is from the NAWC.

Although Navy officials will not comment on the lawsuit, the NAWC has been blamed for other wells surrounding the base that were contaminated by the same chemicals tainting Well 26.

In 1993, the EPA said 37 wells in Casey Village and along Kirk Road had been contaminated by the same chemicals that were contaminating

the eight sites at the NAWC.

On Sept. 16, the Navy awarded a \$4.2 million contract to a Trenton company to build a water-treatment plant off Jacksonville Road to treat contaminated groundwater near the Superfund sites. The plant, which will be able to treat 17,000 gallons of water a day, will pump the treated water into a tributary of the Little Neshaminy Creek.

The Navy also has planned to begin drilling new test wells outside the base near Ivyland Borough, where some contaminants have been detected.

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