

Media Release

Environment Protection Authority



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Edwardstown and Solomontown groundwater contamination investigations: test results released today

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The Environment Protection Authority and SA Health have today visited residents in Edwardstown and Solomontown to inform them of results of air sampling from inside their homes.

In **Solomontown**, Port Pirie, results of air sampling in homes by the EPA and assessment by SA Health has found evidence of soil vapour intrusion.

Two homes recorded levels of benzene above World Health Organization recommended guideline levels and three homes recorded levels near the guideline.

SA Health's Public Health Director, Dr Kevin Buckett, said benzene is a common chemical found in the urban environment and most exposure occurs as a result of vehicle emissions, burning of fuel and, indoors, from tobacco smoke.

"In Solomontown, the benzene appears to have entered houses as vapour from soil and contaminated ground water," Dr Buckett said.

"There is no evidence to suggest any health impacts for residents at the levels recorded.

"However, benzene is a known carcinogen and exposure should be kept to a minimum."

EPA Director of Science and Assessment Peter Dolan said the EPA and SA Health are talking directly with owners and residents of these homes regarding their results.

"We are taking immediate action to improve air quality within these homes," Mr Dolan said.

"Portable indoor air purifying equipment will be temporarily provided to the five affected homes, with the agreement of residents, and closely monitored by the EPA and SA Health, while more permanent options for ventilating those homes are explored in consultation with the residents and owners," he said.

The EPA and SA Health will also develop an expanded sampling program for Solomontown, including re-offering in-home testing to residents who had previously declined.

Sampling in **Edwardstown** revealed the presence of low levels of perchlorethylene (PCE), however the levels are below recommended health guideline levels and do not indicate a risk to health.

"Twenty homes located in areas with the highest likelihood of chemicals being present were sampled for vapour," Mr Dolan said.

“Although low levels of PCE were detected, all of the results were below World Health Organisation (WHO) and USEPA guideline levels for PCE, and as such do not indicate a risk to health.”

Testing was conducted for solvents and industrial chemicals, including trichloroethelene (TCE) and perchlorethylene (PCE), BTEX and selected VOCs.

These chemicals are commonly used in manufacturing processes and fuels.

The EPA and SA Health are currently developing a sampling plan to continue to monitor the levels of PCE over coming months.

This sampling will track any changes in the air levels and provide more detailed data correlating groundwater contamination levels with air quality.

Groundwater testing is also continuing to determine the boundaries of the contaminated plume.

SA Health advises that anyone with a bore should have the water tested regularly to ensure it is fit for purpose. Residents in the affected areas of Edwardstown and South Plympton have been advised not to use bore water until further notice.