

Puchack Well Field

Pennsauken, Camden County

A Citizen's Guide to the Public Health Assessment

Public Comment Draft

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (NJDHSS) has developed a Public Health Assessment for the Puchack Well Field site. The purpose of the Health Assessment is to learn if people are (or were) exposed to contamination from the site at levels that can be harmful to their health. A Public Comment Draft is now available so that citizens may provide comments to the NJDHSS before the Health Assessment document is finalized. This Citizen's Guide is a summary of the November 7, 2001 Health Assessment. If you would like to read the complete document please contact one of the agencies listed on the back.

What is the present condition of the Puchack Well Field site?

The Puchack Well Field is presently out of service. The Puchack Well Field was one of three well fields that supplied drinking water to the city of Camden. Puchack consisted of seven supply wells. One was destroyed during the building of the Betsy Ross Bridge. The remaining six were closed down beginning in 1975. The last was removed from service in May 1998.

Why were the wells closed?

In the early 1970s several contaminants were found in one of the wells. These were chromium, mercury, and several volatile organic compounds, including trichloroethylene and tetrachloroethylene. Contamination spread to the other wells in the Puchack Well Field.

Were people exposed to chemicals from the Puchack Well Field?

Residents of the city of Camden were exposed to volatile organic chemicals, chromium and mercury in their drinking water in the past. The amount of exposure any individual may have had is difficult to determine. This is because the water from each individual well was mixed with water from uncontaminated wells as it traveled from the well field to each house. Some people would have had higher exposures to chemicals than other people based on where they live along the distribution system, consumption habits, and what wells were in use at the time.



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Are people who were exposed to these chemicals likely to have health problems?

Unfortunately, because the amount of contamination that anyone may have had in their water is unknown, scientists cannot say what health risks people face from these past exposures. Although it is unlikely that health effects would occur from the levels of contamination that have been found, adverse health outcomes cannot be ruled out without additional investigations of the community's health.

What does the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services conclude about the site?

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services concludes that the site presently is not a public health hazard, because all of the contaminated wells are out of service. However, it also concludes that the site was a public health hazard in the past, although the public health significance of this exposure is unknown.

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will develop a plan to evaluate health outcome data, possibly including cancer and adverse birth outcome rates, in the areas of the city of Camden that received water from the Puchack Well Field. They will also meet with local health officials and community leaders to develop plans to learn more about community needs as they relate to this site.

Where can I get more information about this site?

For more information about the site, or for a copy of the full Health Assessment, please contact:

Camden County Department of Health
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