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More Homes Affected by Gas Leak In Gunnison

November 29, 2007



Sam Penrod reporting

More homes and businesses in Gunnison appear to be affected from that leak at an underground gasoline tank. And the gasoline may now be threatening a stream.

We got an update today on the extent of the contamination, and now a total of six families have been forced out of their homes because of the gasoline vapors. And a monitoring well near the Sanpitch River is now showing signs of contamination.

The contamination of a leak of a 12,000 gallon underground gasoline tank, at what was a Top Stop convenience store in Gunnison, continues to grow.

At least 19,000 gallons of gasoline seeped into the ground, and still no one knows for sure where all of the gasoline has traveled. Gunnison City Attorney Peter Stirba says, "They are still working on following the plume as it heads toward the Sanpitch River, and although there are some general parameters of the scope of that plume, it still hasn't been precisely determined how large it is and, quite frankly, where it is going."



The city hired its own environmental inspector, who over the last two weeks has been monitoring vapor levels in homes and businesses in Gunnison, giving residents both good and bad news.

Stirba says, "Some of the vapor levels have been fine, which is good because it tells people they don't have to worry. But others have been marginal or the high side, and then we take some proactive steps and that means either evacuating a family or advising them what we suggest, and they make their own independent decision."



A total of five of these soil evacuation systems have now been installed through the town, which will help clear the gasoline out of the ground. But the assessment is that it will take years to complete. "It's going to be two to 10 years perhaps for the dissipation of all of these vapors to occur, and that's just the dissipation of the vapors. As far as addressing those over the long haul, it's still quite complicated."

I spoke with one Gunnison family that has been forced to move out, and they say they are anxious to go back home but so far have not been given any time estimate about when that will happen.