

Fact Sheet #3



Region 10

John Day Vapor Response

John Day, Oregon

Sunday, May 31, 2015

An EPA Emergency Response Team has been helping the City of John Day and the State of Oregon investigate unusual odors in and around homes and commercial buildings along South Canyon Boulevard and SW Brent Street between SW 2nd Avenue and SW 6th Avenue.

Since May 21, EPA crews have been going door to door to take indoor air readings. Most homes we checked had no or very low levels of vapors. However, there are a number of homes where we found levels of vapors, called volatile organic compounds that could cause health concerns for residents. We continue to monitor these buildings daily and have met with the residents to discuss the situation at their house and talk about precautionary measures that should be taken to minimize the vapors in their residence

Since May 28, we have focused efforts on investigating a wide range of potential sources and are gathering additional air and groundwater data that will help us better understand the situation.

What precautionary measures can help?

Some residents have reduced vapors by taking some or all of the follow actions:

- Ventilate! Ventilation is still the most important measure that can be taken to get rid of vapors. Leave windows open for air flow. Create a cross draft by opening two windows and placing an outward facing fan in one of them.
- Fill in cracks or holes in cement basement floors with products such as foam sealer.
- Put down a vapor barrier in crawl spaces where fumes might come up from the ground. Black plastic is one easily available option.
- Limit your time in any room where you smell an unusual odor.



What we're doing now:

- We're studying the area between the east wall of the canyon and the creek, and between SW 2nd and SW 6th Avenues.
- We've detected vapors in homes and businesses, in the sewer, and in the air, and in the soil and groundwater samples we've taken.
- Continuing to collect water and soil samples with a small drill rig to help determine the extent and source of the contamination.
- Continuing to monitor homes with elevated level of vapors.

Was every home in the neighborhood checked?

EPA did not enter vacant houses and we were not able to check residences where residents were out of town for the holiday weekend.

What are the vapors?

We know that the vapors are primarily Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs). Preliminary information indicates solvents and/or gasoline components.

More samples are being collected by EPA to help identify any additional chemicals of concern. As new information becomes available we'll continue to keep you updated.

What level of VOCs are a cause for concern?

Here in John Day, we are working with any residence with total volatile organic compounds exceeding 5 parts per million (5,000 parts per billion).

What happens next?

Once laboratory results are received, we will have a better understanding of measures residents can take to maintain a home safe from fumes.

We believe the fumes are moving through groundwater. We don't know the exact source yet.

We hope the information we get back from the laboratory will get us closer to understanding the cause.

EPA is working with the City of John Day, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and the state and county health departments, to determine what the next steps are and who will be involved.

What Do I Do If I Smell Fumes in My House?

If you smell an unusual odor in your house please call City of John Day Dispatch at 541-575-0030. If you have concerns about the health effects of fumes, call Grant County Health at 541-575-0429.

For More Information?

Call Kay Morrison
EPA Community Outreach at
206-295-1899

Visit the EPA Emergency Response
website at:
www.epaossc.net/johnday

