

Background Information

On May 24, 2013, EPA added the 700 South 1600 East PCE Plume site (the Site) to its National Priorities List (NPL) of Superfund sites. The listing became final on June 24, 2013. A former dry cleaning facility at the nearby Salt Lake City VA Medical Center (VAMC) currently is the only identified source in the area for groundwater beneath the site which is contaminated with tetrachloroethylene, commonly known as PCE. PCE levels at the site are above federal drinking water standards, but drinking water for the community, which comes from the Salt Lake City public water supply, is not impacted. Salt Lake City routinely tests its drinking water pursuant to federal standards. In addition, the artesian fountains at Liberty Park and at 800 South 500 East are routinely tested, and no PCE has been detected. As currently the only identified PCE source, VA is responsible for leading the cleanup under the Superfund program. The addition of the Site to the NPL requires VA to pay for and manage the cleanup. Placement on the NPL guarantees the public the opportunity to participate in the cleanup process from its early stages, which include a detailed site assessment and investigation.

What is PCE?

Tetrachloroethylene (PCE) is a synthetic chemical that is widely used for dry cleaning fabrics and for metal-degreasing operations. It is also used as a starting material (building block) for making other chemicals and is used in some consumer products. PCE is a nonflammable, colorless liquid at room temperature and has a sharp, sweet odor.

What is Vapor Intrusion?

When chemicals or petroleum products are spilled or leak from underground storage tanks, they can give off gases or vapors that can get inside buildings. Common products that can cause vapor intrusion are gasoline or diesel fuel, dry cleaning solvents and industrial degreasers. The vapors can move through the soil and seep through cracks in basements, foundations, sewer lines and other openings.

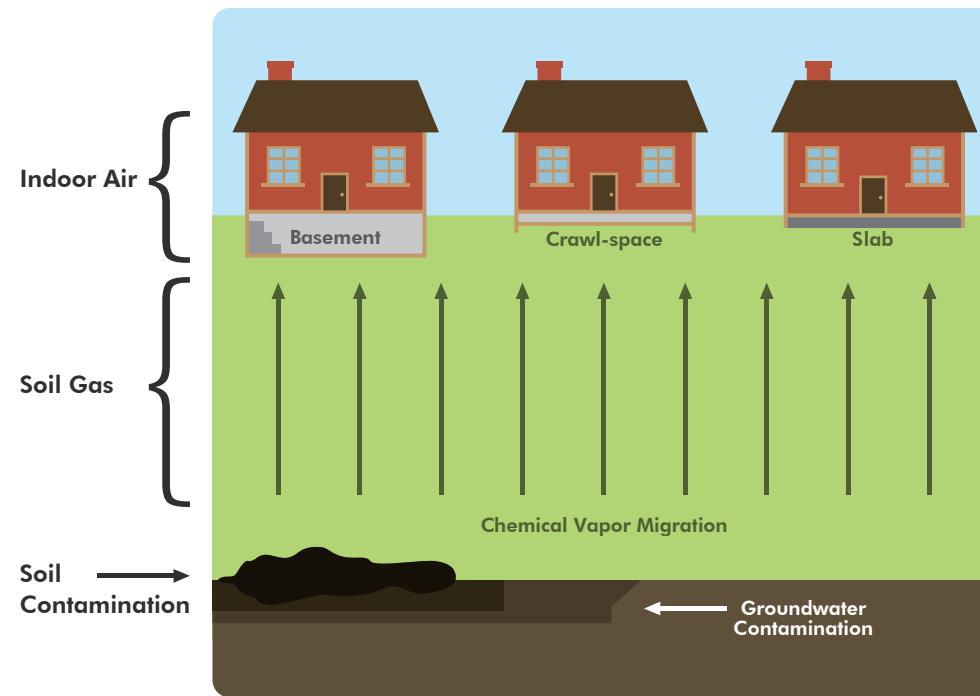


Illustration of how vapors can rise up through soil into your home.

Vapor intrusion is a concern because vapors can build up to a point where the health of residents or workers in those buildings could be at risk. Some vapors from petroleum products have a gasoline odor, others are odor-free.

Health Effects?

Health risks vary based on the type and amount of chemicals. How healthy you are and how long you are exposed are also factors. Some people may experience eye and respiratory irritation, headaches or nausea. These symptoms are temporary and should go away when the vapors are vented. Low-level chemical exposures over many years, however, may raise your lifetime risk of cancer or chronic disease.

Resident's Role

There are just a few things we ask of you to ensure the most accurate sampling possible.

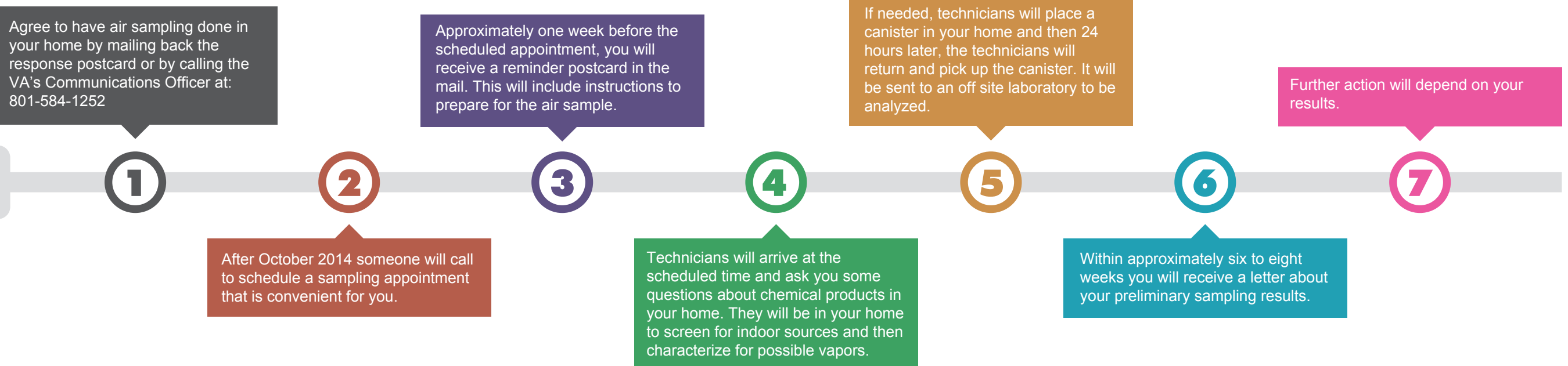
WHAT WE NEED YOU TO DO

- Continue to live your life as normal. You can do most of the things you would do on a normal day. You don't have to leave the house and, for the most part, won't have to take any special precautions.
- Prior to the technicians arriving at your home, it would be helpful to make sure they have access to the first floor and the basement in order to screen with a portable gas chromatograph mass spectrometer (GC/MS).
- When technicians arrive, they will ask you questions about products you use, then screen your home. If needed, they will place a canister to check for longer term vapor presence.
- During the day of sampling you may stay in your home. Technicians will first look for indoor air sources, temporarily remove them and then conduct the tests.

WHAT NOT TO DO THE WEEK OF SAMPLING

- Avoid having freshly dry-cleaned clothing in the home, if at all possible. If you have dry cleaning ready to be picked up, please wait until after the canister has been collected to pick it up.
- Avoid using solvents or degreasers.
- Avoid working on hobby projects that would require the use of paint, glues or other chemicals.
- If you own guns, avoid cleaning them.
- Avoid contact with the canister.

Step-by-Step Air Sampling Process



Household Chemicals

Not all chemical vapors found in homes are coming from the groundwater. A number of commercially available products contain the same chemicals found in the contaminated groundwater. The use or storage of these products in homes or attached garages can cause chlorinated solvents to be found.

Please carefully read the labels of products inside your home to see if they contain ingredients with “chloro” in their name, such as tetrachloroethylene (PCE) or trichloroethylene (TCE). The products that most likely contain this chemical are typically found in metal tubes, aerosol cans, or glass containers.

The following are some examples of chemicals that could contain constituents of concern:

GUN CARE PRODUCTS



Many commercially available gun cleaners and other gun care products contain chlorinated solvents.

ELECTRICAL CLEANERS AND DEGREASERS

Many commercially available electrical cleaners and degreasers contain chlorinated solvents.



GLUES AND ADHESIVES



Some specialized glues contain chlorinated solvents. Check glues that are made to bond acrylics and other plastics.

AUTOMOTIVE DEGREASERS AND CLEANERS

Some common automotive products use chlorinated solvents. In particular, look at brake parts cleaners or “non-flammable” solvents.



Answers to Questions you may have:

Q: What if I don't want indoor air sampling?

A: Sampling is completely optional and you are not required to have your home tested.

Q: How do you know if vapors are coming from inside the home or from the groundwater?

A: The canister we use to take the initial sample only tells us if vapors are present in the air inside the home. It does not tell us the source of those vapors. If vapors are detected in the initial sample, we come back with a specialized instrument that we can use to narrow down the source to a specific room and even to a specific item. Once the source is identified, we ask the resident to remove the item and then we test again. If the follow-up sample still shows vapors, we repeat the process to ensure all inside sources are identified and removed. If we cannot identify an inside source, then we can conclude the source is likely to be the groundwater and we will offer to install a vapor removal system.

Q: How often do you test?

A: Homes with previous detections or systems installed are sampled more frequently.

Q: How much will testing cost me?

A: Nothing. VASLCHCS covers all costs associated with the testing.

Q: What if I don't have a basement?

A: We still recommend having your home tested. We will place the canister in the lowest livable space of your home.

Q: Is my drinking water safe?

A: You are most likely connected to city water. The city obtains its drinking water from deep aquifers or mountain reservoirs, not from the contaminated shallow aquifer. In addition, your city regularly tests its water to ensure it is safe. If you are drinking city water, you are not drinking contaminated water. For information about your drinking water, contact your city's public works office.

Q: What will happen if volatile organic compound vapor is found to be intruding into my house?

A: The investigation and cleanup of the PCE Plume will take a long time but in the meantime VA is committed to installing air remediation systems in those houses that need it while cleanup of the plume is on-going. These systems are similar to those installed to address radon issues. After a successful plume cleanup system is in place, the air remediation systems may no longer be needed and can be decommissioned. Periodic testing will determine when that may happen.

Contact Information

If you have questions or comments, please contact:
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