Evaluation of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) in Indoor Air and Public Drinking Water

People who live and work around the former dry cleaner site are **not likely to get sick** from breathing in or drinking low levels of tetrachloroethylene (PCE) or related chemicals.

Background

- During a water survey in 1982, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) found VOCs, including PCE, in one of the wells connected to the public drinking water system within the groundwater plume. At the time, PCE wasn't regulated by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). However, the well was quickly removed from the distribution system.
- The SDWA added PCE in 1993. The water in Atlantic was tested and found to be within safe levels. We don't know what levels of PCE were in the water before that.
- People who used the public drinking water in Atlantic starting in 1993 until now are not likely to be harmed by PCE or related chemicals from the site. ATSDR isn't sure about harm from drinking the water before 1993.

What is PCE?

- PCE is a type of VOC. These odorless, colorless chemicals can make you sick if you drink or breathe them in at certain levels.
- Dry cleaners use PCE to clean clothes. For years, it was standard practice to dump PCE into the soil outside the building.

How would I be exposed to PCE?

- The dumped chemicals seeped into the soil and ultimately into the water that collects underground. These chemicals can get into the aquifer, where public wells draw water from, and also into the air inside buildings.

What did ATSDR find?

- ATSDR conducted a public health assessment, studying the water and indoor air around the former dry cleaner site.
- ATSDR found that people who live and work around the site are not likely to get sick from breathing in or drinking low levels of PCE or related chemicals.

What is ATSDR doing about it?

- Giving the community information about how to stay safe from dangerous chemicals at home.
- Recommending that EPA and IDNR give updates on site conditions and cleanup.
- Recommending that Atlantic Municipal Utilities continues to monitor wells and the drinking water system according to SDWA regulations.
- You can find the full public assessment report here.

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How to Stay Safe from Dangerous Chemicals at Home

You should be aware of possible dangers in your house, including exposure to chemicals. You can do many things around your house to reduce or prevent contact with dangerous substances.

Use Cleaning Products Safely

Many cleaning products give off fumes that you shouldn't breathe in. Some can burn or irritate your skin and eyes. Most are poisonous if swallowed. To protect you and your family from harm, take these actions:

- Make sure the room you are cleaning has good air flow from a fan or an open window.
- Store your cleaning products in a safe place where your children can't reach them.
- Keep cleaning products in their original labeled containers.
- Don't mix cleaning products.
- Follow the directions on the containers.
- Clearly mark dangerous cleaners.
- Properly close containers after use.

To be safer, use natural cleaning products like vinegar (mildew and grease remover), lemon juice (stain remover, glass cleaner, and deodorizer), baking soda mixed with water (all-purpose cleaner), and olive oil (furniture polisher).

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