

HOMEOWNER'S WELL CONTAMINATED

Gas station must clean up pollution

By Tamara Race
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CARVER — The state has ordered the owner of a Main Street gas station to clean up contamination suspected of polluting a residential well across the street.

The Department of Environmental Protection discovered benzene, a petroleum-based carcinogen, at three times acceptable levels in a residential well owned by William Holmes at 132 Main St.

Holmes formerly owned the gas station now suspected of polluting his well. He sold the business in 1980 to Richard Nantais, whom the DEP cited as the party responsible for assessing, monitoring, and cleaning up the pollution.

Tests conducted in January and May showed 14 parts per billion and 10 ppb respectively in Holmes' well. The accepted standard is 5 ppb, according to the DEP.

DEP spokeswoman Julie Hutcheson said there are few other residential wells in the area, and there was no evidence of pollution in a well that services the Carver Square shopping plaza, Our Lady of Lourdes' Catholic church and several office buildings in the area.

The state tests the shopping plaza well regularly during the year, but not necessarily for petroleum contamination, Hutcheson said.

Carver

"Once we know the extent of the contamination from the gas station, we will know what further well testing should be done in the area," Hutcheson said.

Carver has no municipal water system. All homes and businesses use private wells.

Holmes said his water has had an odd smell for more than six years, but he never bothered to have the water tested until this spring when the church next door offered to purchase the property for use as a rectory.

In preparation for the potential land purchase, Our Lady of the Lourdes hired Norfolk Environmental to conduct a site assessment of Holmes property and had the well tested.

Holmes said he relies on bottled water for drinking and cooking, but still uses the well for other water needs.

The purchase of Holmes' residence has been put on hold due to the impending retirement on Monday of Our Lady of Lourdes pastor Father Gallagher.

Church officials said they may still be interested in Holmes property if an alternative source of water can be found.

Nantais has hired a licensed professional to assess the site and will file an immediate response action plan as required by the DEP.

Hutcheson said Nantais has willingly complied with the state's regulations in a timely fashion.

She said contamination has turned up in groundwater test wells on the gas station property, but "I'm told the property's well tests clean although I haven't received the results yet," Hutcheson said. "It looks like we have identified the source of the pollution and that's the first step."

The DEP did not know Holmes was a former owner of the gas station and has not named him as a responsible party at this time, Hutcheson said.

"We don't know enough about the fuel spill yet," she said. "There are ways to determine how old a fuel spill is, but it's too soon to make any judgments. We're in the preliminary stages of the clean-up process."

Even if Holmes is able to secure an alternative water source such as the adjacent Carver Square well, the contamination would still have to be cleaned up, Hutcheson said.

"Since all of Carver is serviced by wells for water, it is important to capture the contaminant and get it cleaned up," Hutcheson said. "We wouldn't want to take any chances."