

NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

NPL Site

September 2022

GEORGETOWN NORTH GROUNDWATER | Georgetown, Delaware Sussex County

Site Location:

The Georgetown North Groundwater site is a groundwater plume encompassing approximately 1 square-mile underlying commercial and residential areas within the town of Georgetown in southern Delaware.

Site History:

The site consists of a groundwater plume with two known former dry-cleaning sources - Georgetown Dry Cleaners and Thoro-Kleen Dry Cleaners. Plumes from these two facilities appear to have co-mingled and contributed to the contamination of municipal groundwater wells in Georgetown. The state of Delaware began their investigation into potential sources when the water authority reported contaminants in the untreated water in 1985. There may also be other potential contributors to this plume which have not yet been fully investigated.

Site Contamination/Contaminants:

Groundwater is contaminated with the solvent tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and its breakdown products. PCE is commonly used in commercial and industrial operations such as dry cleaning.

Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:

The town of Georgetown uses groundwater wells as the primary source of drinking water in this area. There are two active municipal wells that are contaminated above EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) for PCE in drinking water within the plume area. The water authority serves approximately 7,259 people who could be directly exposed to drinking contaminated water from this wellfield. The water authority treats the contaminated groundwater, and the final processed drinking water currently meets all regulatory standards. There are also two contaminated industrial wells used at the nearby Townsends, Inc. cannery for commercial purposes. Townsends began treatment on these wells once the contamination was discovered.

Vapor intrusion may also pose a risk to residents and workers. Both dry cleaners were found to have volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in indoor air exceeding EPA's Regional Screening Levels (RSLs). No mitigation has been performed. The former Georgetown Dry Cleaners is currently being used as a church. The Thoro-Kleen building has been razed. No indoor air sampling has occurred in any other buildings above the plume.

Response Activities (to date):

The state has conducted two response actions at Georgetown Cleaners: removal of an Underground Storage Tank (UST) and excavation and disposal of 310 tons of contaminated sludge and soil. The state also conducted a response action at the Thoro-Kleen Dry Cleaners: removal of an UST and an above-ground storage tank. Groundwater and soil contamination were not addressed during these tank removal activities at either property. Georgetown City's water treatment plant was updated in 2017 to meet standards for volatile organic contaminants. The two municipal wells are blended with additional public wells and treated to ensure that the drinking water that is distributed to the residents meets the regulatory standards.

Need for NPL Listing:

The state of Delaware referred the site to the EPA in 2016 to assist in fully characterizing the extent of the groundwater contamination. Other federal and state cleanup programs were evaluated but are not viable at this time due to the extent of the contamination and complexity of the geology. The city of Georgetown and the state support NPL listing. The EPA received a letter from the state of Delaware in support of listing this site on the NPL.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. [ATSDR ToxFAQs](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) can be found on the Internet at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp> or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.