



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois EPA To Install Temporary Air Strippers to Remove Vinyl Chloride from Sauk Village Public Drinking Water Supply

Will Reduce Contamination While More Permanent Solutions Are Being Implemented; Bottled Water Donated in Meantime

Springfield, IL – The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) announced today that temporary air strippers to remove vinyl chloride contamination are currently being installed at the Sauk Village water treatment plant. Once installed, these will provide immediate relief to the residents of Sauk Village, while the village works to develop its long-term resolution. The agency expects the air strippers to be operational by early next week. Until then, bottled water is being donated and available for village residents to drink.

In addition, the Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois EPA are hosting a public availability session on Wednesday, July 25 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. in the Bloom Trail High School Auditorium, at 22331 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago Heights, to give interested Sauk Village residents an opportunity to hear the facts and discuss concerns about the vinyl chloride.

Governor Quinn directed the Illinois EPA and Illinois Department of Public Health to move expeditiously to ensure that the citizens of Sauk Village receive the cleanest and safest drinking water available.

The Illinois EPA directed staging work to begin at the treatment plant on Monday, July 23. Illinois EPA's contractor, AMEC, and its plumbing and electrical subcontractors started work on plumbing needed to allow for installation of two 500 gallon per minute capacity air strippers today. Following necessary testing, Illinois EPA anticipates the air strippers will be operational by next week. Two additional air strippers will be brought into the plant, installed and tested during the week of July 30. Until then, bottled water will be available.

The state of Illinois thanks two companies for donating water to Sauk Village. In addition to the bottled water already purchased and being distributed by the village, Coca-Cola, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health, has donated 1,000 cases of half-liter Dasani bottled water for Sauk Village residents, and Illinois-American Water Co. is donating another 500 cases of bottled water for village residents who prefer to use bottled water until the additional treatment equipment is in operation.

Sauk Village Add 1

While the state will pay the initial costs of the strippers and their installation, Sauk Village could be required to reimburse the state if the Illinois Attorney General's Office pursues cost recovery. The village also remains responsible for installing permanent air strippers that will address the contamination problem for the long term. The Illinois Attorney General's Office, on a referral from Illinois EPA, has filed a motion in court seeking an order requiring the village to be responsible for interim treatment.

The installation of the temporary strippers will provide the village with additional time to take full responsibility for the treatment for long-term water system improvements.

On July 16, Illinois EPA notified Sauk Village that vinyl chloride (VC) has been detected and confirmed in finished (distributed) water at 1.68 parts per billion (ppb). This level exceeds the state's early warning MCL prevention standard for vinyl chloride of 1.0 ppb. Water users should be receiving the mandatory notice from the village this week that vinyl chloride has been found in the finished water that enters the distribution system. Although the federal Maximum Contaminant Level of 2.0 ppb has not been exceeded, the increased levels are unsatisfactory to the state of Illinois. That is why Illinois EPA, working with the Illinois Attorney General's Office, has insisted that the village provide bottled water as an alternative for residents.

Sauk Village also provides finished drinking water to Candlelight Village Mobile Home Park and Weatherstone Lakes Mobile Home Park.

Illinois EPA continues to sample both the well water and the finished water on a regular basis. Both the Illinois EPA and the Illinois Department of Public Health insist that the village's water supply be treated as soon as possible to reduce these levels.

Exposure to low levels of vinyl chloride at or above the maximum contaminate level of 2 ppb over many years may lead to impaired immune system function, kidney or liver damage, and may increase the risk of liver cancer.

The Illinois EPA is conducting an investigation to help determine the sources of the groundwater contamination.

A new Illinois EPA and Illinois Department of Public Health fact sheet on the Sauk Village Water Supply is now available online. It and other related documents can be accessed by the link under "Highlights" on the Illinois EPA home page (www.epa.state.il.us).

A USEPA fact sheet containing health information for vinyl chloride can be found on U.S. EPA's website at: <http://water.epa.gov/drink/contaminants/basicinformation/vinyl-chloride.cfm>.

The Illinois Department of Public Health also provides general information on vinyl chloride at: <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/factsheets/vinyl-chloride.htm>

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