

EPA Adds Dorado, Puerto Rico Site to the Federal Superfund List ^[1]

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(New York, N.Y. – Sept. 7, 2016) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency added the Dorado Groundwater Contamination Site in the municipality of Dorado, Puerto Rico to its Superfund National Priorities List of the country's most hazardous waste sites. Sampling at the site has found chemical contamination that is impacting wells used to supply drinking water to the local communities. Drinking water with the solvents, which include tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, can have serious health impacts including damage to the liver and increasing the risk of cancer.

When contamination was found at drinking water supply wells of the Maguayo and Dorado Urbano public water systems, the Puerto Rico Department of Health ordered to close the impacted wells to protect public health. Currently, the drinking water used by the community in non-impacted wells complies with drinking water standards. The supplied drinking water is also being tested on a quarterly basis, as required by the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

“Ensuring that people have a safe source of drinking water is an EPA priority,” said Carmen R. Guerrero Pérez, Director of EPA’s Caribbean Environmental Protection Division. “By placing this site on the Superfund list, the EPA can take additional actions to ensure that the residents of Dorado are drinking clean water and that people’s health is protected.”

The Maguayo and Dorado Urbano public water systems have drinking water wells that serve approximately 67,000 people. Groundwater samples collected by the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority found tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, solvents commonly used in industrial processes, in part of the system. The EPA’s investigation has not yet identified the source of groundwater contamination in the public supply wells.

After receiving a letter from the Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board supporting the inclusion of the Dorado site on the Superfund list, the EPA has determined that a listing offers the best course of action to protect human health and clean up the contamination. The Superfund final designation makes sites eligible for funds to conduct long-term cleanups. The EPA took public comment and considered public input before finalizing the decision.

The Superfund program operates on the principle that polluters should pay for the cleanups rather than passing the costs on to taxpayers. The EPA searches for parties legally responsible for contaminating a site, and holds those parties accountable for cleanup costs.

For Federal Register notices and supporting documents for final and proposed sites, on the day of publication visit: <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/current-npl-updates-new-proposed-npl-sites-and-new-npl-sites> [2].

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