



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

DIRK KEMPTHORNE – Governor
KARL B. KURTZ – Director

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
450 West State Street, 10th Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
PHONE 208-334-5625
FAX 208-334-0668

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Tom Shanahan
(208) 334-0668

Residents Invited to Discuss Well Contamination

The Idaho Departments of Health and Welfare and Environmental Quality would like to invite area residents to a community meeting to discuss ethylene dibromide (EDB) contamination found in some private wells in northwest Bannock County. The contamination comes from the southwest migration of a large plume of EDB under Fort Hall. The source of the contamination is unknown. The meeting will include discussion of:

- The area of contamination;
- The amount of EDB contamination found;
- The possible health risks associated with using contaminated well water; and
- The options residents have to reduce their exposure to EDB.

This informal meeting is an opportunity for affected residents to ask questions of health and environmental professionals and discuss concerns. Educational materials will be provided to help private well users understand the issue and help reduce their exposure.

Date: Monday April 25, 2005
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 pm
Place: Southeastern District Health Department, Assembly Rooms 1 and 2
1901 Alvin Ricken Drive
Pocatello, ID

If you have questions or would like to receive a copy of the health consultations, contact the Bureau of Community and Environmental Health toll-free at 1-866-240-3553. You can scroll down to the next page for a fact sheet on EDB.

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(Editors: For more information, contact Chris Corwin, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Boise, 1-866-240-3533.)

EDB Fact Sheet

What is EDB?

Ethylene dibromide (EDB) is a manmade, toxic chemical. It is a colorless liquid with a mild sweet smell. In the past EDB was used to kill bugs in row crops and orchards. It was also used in leaded gasoline. Because of how dangerous it is, EDB was banned from those uses in 1984 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Now EDB is used to protect logs from bugs, beehives from moths, and used in dyes. You can find EDB in water, soil and air.

Should you worry about EDB?

EDB could be harmful to your health if you are exposed to more than 0.05 parts per billion (ppb) in your drinking water. There are some wells in Idaho that have EDB in them above this number. While it is unlikely that this level of EDB will make you sick, we still recommend that you test your well water. If you have EDB above this level, you should treat your water to lower the chances of getting sick. As with any toxic chemical, no exposure is good for your health.

People that take the medicine Antabuse (disulfiram) to treat alcohol abuse, are more sensitive to the toxic effects of EDB. Contact your doctor or pharmacist to find out simple steps you can take to lower the risks.

How can EDB enter your body?

- **Touching:** EDB passes very easily through skin. People may be exposed if they touch the chemical or touch polluted soil. Bathing or showering with polluted water may also expose a person.
- **Drinking:** People may be exposed if they drink polluted water.
- **Breathing:** EDB can enter the body when people breathe its vapors. People using EDB polluted water for household purposes, such as washing, bathing, or cooking may breathe small amounts of EDB released from polluted water.

What are the possible health effects from exposure to EDB?

- **Short term:** may cause damage to the liver, stomach, and adrenal glands, along with significant reproductive system toxicity, particularly the testes.
- **Long-term:** may cause damage to the respiratory system, nervous system, liver, heart, and kidneys; and cancer.

How do I know if my well contains EDB?

If your well lies in or near the shaded area on the map, your well may contain EDB. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) has been testing some private wells. They will keep testing as long as there is funding. Also, a water lab can test your water for EDB. Look in the yellow pages of your telephone directory under "Laboratories—Testing" to find a qualified lab.

What can I do if my well contains EDB?

If you find that your well has EDB, you could connect to a public water system. They have clean water that is tested for the safety of their customers. If you can not connect to a public water system, there are water treatment systems that can reduce or eliminate EDB from your water. These systems use an activated carbon filter to filter out EDB and other pollutants.

No matter what type of system you get, it is important to change the filters on a regular basis. This makes sure they are removing the pollutants. Also, do not use activated charcoal filters with hot water. The heat will weaken the filter and it will not be able to remove the pollutants.

Other ways to reduce EDB exposure from well water include:

- reducing water flow into the house;
- reducing time spent in the shower or bath; and
- installing an exhaust fan above sinks or showers.

For more information, please contact:

Bureau of Community and Environmental Health (BCEH)

Environmental Health Education and Assessment Program

450 W. State St. 6th Floor,

Boise, Idaho 83720-0036

(208)334-0606)

Toll Free: 1-866-240-3553

BCEH@idhw.state.id.us