



News Release

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Agreement reached on Ephrata Landfill cleanup

SPOKANE—The public has until Jan. 27, 2007 to review and comment on a legal order that requires the city of Ephrata and Grant County to clean up contamination that may have been caused by leaking drums of waste at the Ephrata landfill.

The landfill is located about three miles south of Ephrata, east of Highway 28.

Under the formal order from the state Department of Ecology (Ecology) the city and county have agreed to study the nature and extent of the contamination and determine the available cleanup options. These are requirements under the state's Model Toxics Control Act.

"The city and county have been working cooperatively for years to monitor and contain pollution at the landfill," said Ephrata City Administrator Wes Crago. "This voluntary agreement will allow us to continue these efforts, minimize local taxpayer burden, and ensure that efficient and effective cleanup occurs at the landfill."

The city and county will move ahead right away with interim cleanup activities to protect people and the environment from exposure to the chemicals in approximately 2,000 drums of hazardous, industrial waste and in the soil around them. The drums of industrial waste were buried in 1975.

The interim activities include verifying the location of the buried drums, sampling their contents and removing them. The city and county also will construct a cap over the closed portion of the landfill and treat and dispose of contaminated ground water.

The drums buried in the northern portion of the landfill constitute an "ongoing threat to human health and the environment," according to the order. Some of the contaminants detected in the ground water are the same chemicals that are believed to be in the drums.

"This is the kind of complicated and serious contamination that can take years to clean up," said Mike Hibbler who manages Ecology's solid waste office in Spokane. "We're glad that our negotiations have wrapped up and this important work can begin"

Groundwater monitoring began in 1988. Grant County has drilled and sampled 27 wells at the site. Concentrations of several different contaminants were found in the aquifers beneath the landfill at levels above those which require cleanup. The chemicals include organic compounds, metals, petroleum products, pesticides, and others.

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Signing this “agreed order” makes the city and county eligible to apply for grant funding from the state’s toxics account to pay for the majority of the on-the-ground cleanup work.

The city of Ephrata began operating the Ephrata landfill in approximately 1942 and owned and operated it until 1974. The landfill was operated as an open dump and burning dump prior to 1962. The landfill operated continually as an unlined cell until a new cell was opened in 2005. In 1994, the city deeded its landfill property to Grant County.

The agreed order and accompanying documents will be available Dec. 28 at the Ephrata Public Library on Alder Street in Ephrata and at the Department of Ecology’s office on Monroe Street in Spokane.

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For more information:

Ecology’s Web site: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov>

Broadcast version

The public has until January 27th to review and comment on a legal order that requires the city of Ephrata and Grant County to begin cleaning up contamination that may have come from leaking drums of waste at the Ephrata landfill.

Under the formal “agreed order” from the Department of Ecology, the city and county have agreed to study the nature and extent of the contamination and determine the available cleanup options.

The city and county will move ahead right away to remove two-thousand buried drums of hazardous industrial waste to protect people and the environment from exposure to the chemicals.

Contact Ecology for details.