

FACT SHEET: Groundwater Contamination at South Tahoe “Y”

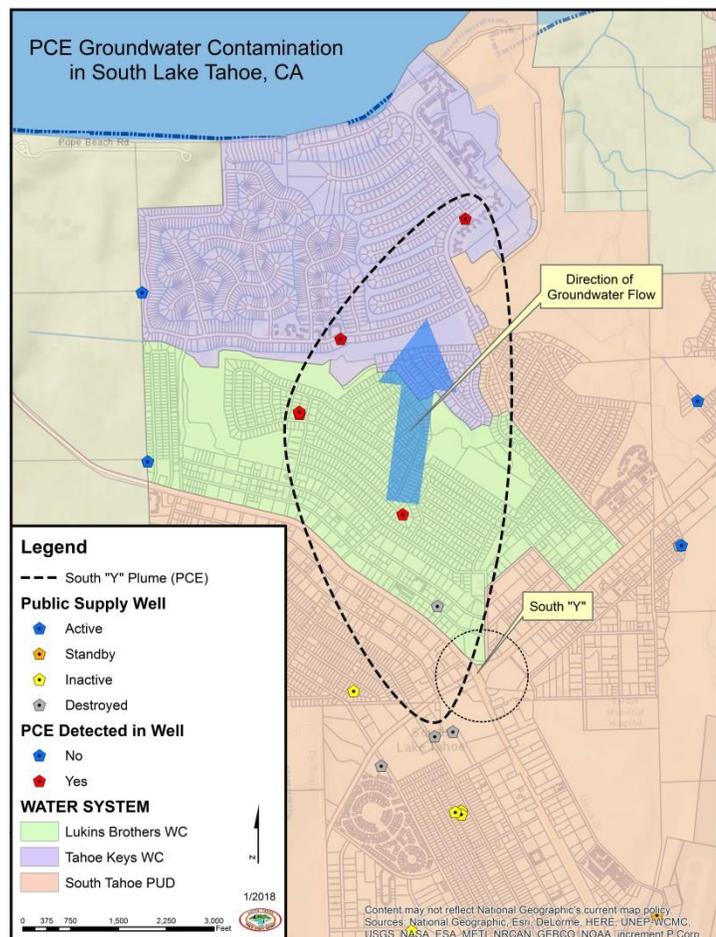
In South Lake Tahoe, the primary source of drinking water is groundwater. In 1989, the contaminant tetrachloroethylene (PCE) was first found in drinking water wells near the intersection of Highways 50 and 89, referred to as the South “Y”. Today, the PCE remains in groundwater and forms a contaminant plume believed to cover more than 400 acres. PCE is a manmade chemical that was used from the early 1960s through the mid-1980s as a solvent for dry cleaning clothes and degreasing metal. During the late 1980s, concerns about the toxicity of PCE led Federal and State environmental agencies to list PCE as a probable carcinogen and as a toxic pollutant. Presently, five public drinking water wells have been impacted by the South “Y” PCE Plume. When PCE is detected in a well, the well is shut down and treatment is added to remove the contaminant, or an alternative source of drinking water supply is provided. Water providers in South Tahoe are working together to protect and sustain our groundwater to make sure you have safe drinking water.

How would I be exposed to PCE?

Exposure to PCE typically occurs from breathing contaminated air, drinking contaminated water or eating food contaminated with PCE. PCE can get into drinking water when it is spilled or improperly disposed of and leaches into groundwater. Established drinking water standards and regular water quality testing by water providers are used to ensure our water is safe to drink.

Where is PCE in South Lake Tahoe?

The South “Y” Plume extends north from the South “Y” to the Tahoe Keys, and toward Lake Tahoe. Groundwater used by wells operated by the Lukins Brothers Water Company (LBWC) and Tahoe Keys Property Owners Association (TKPOA) are currently impacted by the plume. During the 1990s, the South Tahoe Public Utility District (STPUD) installed a treatment facility to remove PCE from four drinking water wells. Today, three of the wells have been destroyed and the remaining well is currently not used. In 2009, TKPOA installed a treatment system to remove PCE from groundwater at one of its wells. In 2014, Lukins discovered PCE in two wells and immediately stopped using them. All three drinking water systems are interconnected and the water providers have the ability to share water and are working together to ensure our entire community has access to reliable and safe drinking water.



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What is being done about PCE?

The Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board is the state regulatory agency which oversees the cleanup of contaminated groundwater. Lahontan has conducted numerous investigations to determine the source of PCE and is working with the responsible parties to determine the total extent of their contamination. The South Tahoe water providers are working together to develop and implement short-term fixes and long-term solutions to provide clean drinking water to our community. To date, the water providers have secured a \$500,000 grant from the State Water Resources Control Board to complete a feasibility study that will help to identify potential alternatives for addressing contamination from the South Y Plume.

Food for thought

In Tahoe, historically, we have had some of the most pristine drinking water in the world. Water providers in South Lake are working together to ensure every drop of water that flows from your tap is safe.

For more information go to www.stpud.us/groundwater

