

COMMITTEE TO BRIDGE THE GAP

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Documents Released Showing at Current Treatment Rates, it Will Take 50,000 Years to Clean Up Groundwater at Rocketdyne Site

Company Proposes Shutting Nearly Half of Groundwater Remediation Facilities

So much toxic TCE was spilled at the Rocketdyne site above Simi Valley that at current treatment rates, it will take 50,000 years to clean up the groundwater at the site, it was revealed today. The Committee to Bridge the Gap, a watchdog group that has been monitoring the facility for more than two decades, released Rocketdyne documents that show that its much-touted groundwater remediation program is removing only 10 gallons of TCE per year from the contaminated water at the site. NASA records indicate that 1.2 *million* gallons of TCE were used at the facility--primarily to wash off rocket test stands--of which 530,000 gallons were released into the groundwater and soil. Furthermore, the Rocketdyne records reveal that the treatment system is progressively removing less and less TCE as time goes on.

“At current treatment rates, it would take 50,000 years to clean up the groundwater that Rocketdyne contaminated in 50 years of operations,” said Daniel Hirsch, President of the Committee to Bridge the Gap. “That’s a thousand years of cleanup work for each year of pollution. When are we going to learn that it is far easier to mess up this world than to repair it?”

Additionally, Rocketdyne has asked the state Department of Toxics Substances Control (DTSC) to approve shutting down nearly half of groundwater treatment facilities at the site. DTSC has scheduled a public meeting on the Rocketdyne request for Wednesday evening, 7-9 pm, at the Simi Valley City Hall Community Room, 2929 Tapo Canyon Road.

Rocketdyne has been running the groundwater remediation system at only about 20% of its design capacity, documents reveal. “Rather than shutting down nearly half the groundwater treatment system,” says Hirsch, “Rocketdyne should be running it at full capacity and, indeed, significantly increasing cleanup of the contaminated groundwater. 50,000 years is far too long to wait.”

In support of shutting down much of the treatment system, Rocketdyne now argues that the system was never intended to treat the groundwater or remove TCE in the first place, but is merely a temporary measure to prevent the spread of the plume. However, Rocketdyne documents, approved by the regulators, state just the opposite, that the system is designed as a groundwater remediation operation to remove the TCE. As recently as two years ago, Rocketdyne was reported in the press as saying that the “pump-and-treat” system would complete the cleanup of the groundwater in “several more years.” “Now we know it would take 50,000 years at this rate, many times longer than recorded history.” said Hirsch. “They’d better have a good Plan B.”

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referenced documents available upon request