



PRESS RELEASE

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SCV Water files lawsuit against Whittaker Corporation

SCV Water has filed a lawsuit against the Whittaker Corporation, seeking remediation and cost recovery for the removal of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and further remediation of perchlorate contamination from the Santa Clarita Valley ground water basin. The suit was filed in the United States District Court, Central District of California.

The Whittaker Site, 996 acres in the center of Santa Clarita, was used for munitions manufacturing up until 1987. The site itself was found to be contaminated with very high levels of ammonium perchlorate, as well as VOCs perchloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE). The site continues to be subject to a cleanup order under the supervision of the State Department of Toxic Substances Control.

This isn't the first time water providers have had to resort to litigation to compel Whittaker to clean up the damages its operations have caused in the community's groundwater basin. In 2000, the predecessors to SCV Water filed suit to seek reimbursement of response costs, replacement water purchase costs, ongoing wellhead treatment, and well replacement. In 2003, Federal Court Judge, the Honorable Howard Matz, issued a published opinion finding that Whittaker and others were liable under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Recovery Act ("CERCLA") for perchlorate contamination found in SCV water supply wells.

In 2007, Whittaker entered into a settlement agreement for the remediation or replacement of five production wells. Currently SCV Water operates two well treatment facilities (covering three impacted wells) which use a special resin designed to remove perchlorate molecules from the water.

Since that time, additional wells not included in the original settlement have been impacted by or threatened with perchlorate contamination, and VOC's have been detected at a number of wells. Additional treatment facilities and operations will be needed to address these.

"The mandates issued to Whittaker in previous settlements do not adequately address the continuing spread of perchlorate contamination, and do not require Whittaker to address VOCs at all," said Matt Stone, general

manager of SCV Water. “It is Whittaker’s responsibility to reimburse the water providers and our community for the cost of replacement water, remediation, and additional groundwater treatment.”

Informal discussions with the Whittaker Corporation have not brought resolution, so the complaint was filed.

“We regularly collect and test water samples from every well in our system,” said Jim Leserman, senior engineer with SCV Water. “Our efforts confirm that the drinking water being served in the SCV is safe, and meets all state and federal drinking water health standards, and it’s important that Whittaker continues to fund the ongoing efforts.”

“Whittaker should step up and cover the cost of this remediation,” added Stone. “Unfortunately, history suggests they will continue to stall in hopes of postponing or avoiding their responsibilities. Despite the recent news accounts and public relations charm campaign to depict the Whittaker site cleanup as ‘nearly complete’, the legacy of their historic contamination of the community’s groundwater basin remains to be fully addressed.”

Information on the status of the Whittaker Bermite contamination and clean-up can be found at the City of Santa Clarita’s informational page www.whittakerbermite.com.

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