

- PG&E POISONS THE GROUNDWATER
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The presence of hexavalent chromium (sometimes called "Chrome 6") in water turns the water bright yellow. This photo, by Cameron Hickey on behalf of the Center for Public Integrity, depicts that phenomenon. Photo online via PBS.

What happened to the chrome 6 once it was discharged to the unlined ponds or sprayed onto the soil? Following the normal process of nature, called the "<u>hydrologic cycle</u>," the toxic material (now called "<u>the plume</u>") was free to travel from where it was (in the ponds) to where it should never have gone (<u>to the groundwater</u>).

Once it was in the <u>aquifer</u> that supplied Hinkley residents with all their <u>water</u>, nothing stopped the toxic material from getting into the peoples' wells. Wherever the plume traveled, the corresponding <u>wells in its path</u> were contaminated.

When PG&E knew the levels of chromium 6 were high, how did the company interact with the citizens of Hinkley? What did they tell them about swimming in their pools? About bathing in their homes? About watering their animals and plants?

Knowing full well how much chrome 6 the company had used for so many decades, PG&E told neighbors of the plant to

...avoid drinking your well water, but it is safe to use for all other domestic purposes such as bathing and watering animals and plants.

It is difficult to comprehend how anyone could have made such a statement in light of the facts. Credits:

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/PG-E-POISONS-THE-GROUNDWATER-Erin-Brockovich

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

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Media Stream

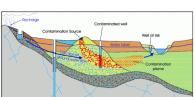
<u>The Hydrologic Cycle</u> Image online, courtesy NASA. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/The-Hydrologic-Cycle0</u>

Contamination Plume

Infiltration to the Ground Water

Image online, courtesy the ncsu.edu website. View this asset at: <u>http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Contamination-Plume</u>





Contaminated Wells

View this asset at:

Image online, courtesy the Maine.gov website. View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Contaminated-Wells

Image, described above, from the EPA. Image online, courtesy EPA.

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Hexavalent Chromium Turns Water Yellow Photo by Cameron Hickey, for the Center for Public Integrity. Photo online via PBS. View this asset at:

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