



0. PG&E POISONS THE GROUNDWATER - Story Preface

1. DEATH & DESTRUCTION IN MOJAVE

2. MISLEADING STATEMENTS

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5. TONS OF CHROME 6

6. PG&E POISONS THE GROUNDWATER

7. DECEPTION REIGNS

8. SEVENTY-SEVEN PLAINTIFFS SUE

9. THE BATTLE

10. PG&E IS IN TROUBLE

11. TRIAL AND SETTLEMENT

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 "hydrologic cycle," the toxic material (now called "the plume") was free to travel from where it was (in the ponds) to where it should never have gone (to the groundwater).

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

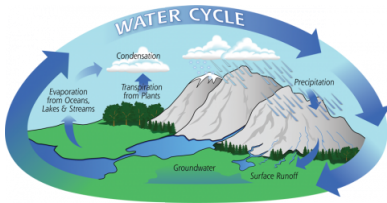
Credits:

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)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/PG-E-POISONS-THE-GROUNDWATER-Erin-Brockovich)

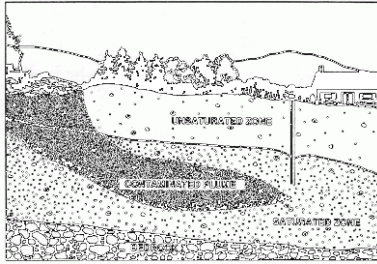
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The Hydrologic Cycle

Image online, courtesy NASA.

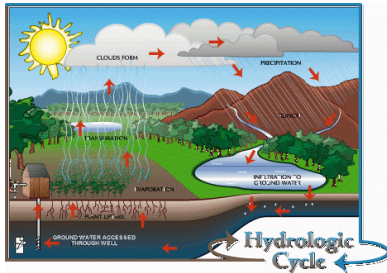
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Contamination Plume

Image online, courtesy the ncsu.edu website.

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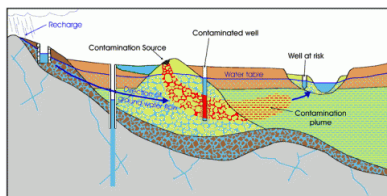


Infiltration to the Ground Water

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

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Contaminated Wells

Image online, courtesy the [Maine.gov](http://www.maine.gov) website.

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Hexavalent Chromium Turns Water Yellow

Photo by Cameron Hickey, for the Center for Public Integrity. Photo online via PBS.

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