



Phase Out Toxic TCE to Protect Minnesota Communities

What is TCE?

Trichloroethylene (TCE) is an industrial solvent used for cleaning and degreasing metal parts.

Health Risks of TCE

TCE exposure causes cancer. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services classifies TCE as “a known human carcinogen.” The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) says that TCE is “carcinogenic to humans by all routes of exposure.” Short-term exposure can induce central nervous system effects and respiratory problems. Exposure to TCE raises a number of health concerns for the developing fetus.

TCE Pollutes our Air and Water

TCE represents a significant threat to communities when it is released into water, soil, or air. TCE can enter soil and groundwater when it is leaked from industrial sites or improperly disposed. Once in groundwater, it is a long lasting and persistent contaminant. In addition, toxic air pollution can occur from facilities using TCE.

Toxic Air Emissions

Industrial users of TCE must ensure TCE emissions do not exceed the health limit of 2 micrograms per cubic meter of air. In 2019, the discovery that Water Gremlin in **White Bear Township** exceeded this limit for 15 years raised significant health concerns for the surrounding community. In 2020, a report by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) found other facilities using TCE were polluting the air up to 95 times the safe level established by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Water Contamination

The EPA has identified TCE as one of “the most frequently detected volatile organic compounds in ground water in the United States.” In Minnesota, TCE groundwater pollution has required many communities to shut down wells or install treatment equipment to provide safe drinking water, including **Bayport, Baytown Township, New Brighton, Fridley, Spring Park, St. Louis Park, Edina, Spring Grove, and Waite Park**. MPCA has identified 626 previously closed groundwater contamination sites that need to be reevaluated to determine if TCE contamination is affecting drinking water.

Soil and Indoor Air Pollution

When TCE contaminates groundwater, vapors can rise through the soil and seep through foundation cracks into indoor air. Vapor intrusion raises serious health concerns for people living or working within the structure, especially children or pregnant women. TCE vapor intrusion has affected communities including the **Como Neighborhood of Minneapolis**, the **City of St. Louis Park**, the **St. Paul Midway Neighborhood**, and businesses in the **City of Mound**. In addition, MPCA found 1,429 superfund sites with the potential for vapor intrusion from solvents including TCE – 200 that are located near sensitive populations (schools and day care facilities).

Minnesota should set an end date for the use of toxic TCE

Currently, over 80 facilities across Minnesota are permitted to use TCE despite availability of safer alternatives. MPCA outreach to TCE users has led five of the largest users to voluntarily move to safer alternatives in 2019. It's time to set an end date for TCE use so that all users shift to widely available and safer alternatives. Minnesota communities are already dealing with a legacy of toxic TCE contamination. It's time to enact a deadline for phasing out the industrial use of TCE to protect our workers and communities.