

Fact Sheet  
March 2004

Former Safety-Kleen Inc. Service Center  
Los Alamitos, CALIFORNIA



## *Chemicals Found in the Soil and Groundwater at the Former Safety-Kleen Site*

DTSC is one of six Boards and Departments with in the California Environmental Protection Agency. The Department's mission is to restore, protect and enhance the environmental quality and economic vitality, by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.

State of California



California  
Environmental  
Protection Agency



*Looking east along the alley south of Florista Street. The former Safety-Kleen building is on the left, fifth and sixth doors down.*

We have found chemicals in the soil and groundwater at the former Safety-Kleen, Inc. property in Los Alamitos. This fact sheet tells you what we found and what happens next, and asks for your input.

Our agency is the Department of Toxic Substances Control. Our role is to protect human health and the environment by overseeing the investigation and any possible cleanup of the Safety-Kleen site.

Safety-Kleen operated a service center that stored and shipped chemicals including cleaning solvents. Tests of the soil began in 1991, shortly after the facility closed. So far, mineral spirits, benzene, chlorinated solvents, and vinyl chloride have been found beneath the pavement at the site. We plan to take more samples to further understand the site within the next 6 to 8 months.

Please complete and return the short survey enclosed with this fact sheet to let us know your level of interest about the site. This will help us plan further outreach activities for the community. Please return by March 23, 2004.

The former Safety-Kleen Service Center is at 3876 Florista Street in Los Alamitos, close to a medical center, an Alzheimer's center, and until recently a gymnastics school for children.

The site investigation and cleanup team is made up of our agency, the current landowner (Tenet Health System), the former site operator (Safety-Kleen), and their contractors. Safety-Kleen is paying for the investigation and any cleanup that may be needed.

Safety-Kleen entered into a Consent Agreement with us in 1996 to investigate and clean up the site. This includes testing the groundwater several times each year. The groundwater tests have shown the presence of chlorinated solvents. The latest tests showed vinyl chloride in the groundwater at 110 parts per billion as of November 2003. Mineral spirits (petroleum products) were either absent or at very low levels in the groundwater samples.

Our main concern is the vinyl chloride. This chemical results from the breakdown of chlorinated solvents. This means that as the chemicals in groundwater break down, vinyl chloride levels may increase over time. Vinyl chloride can move out of the groundwater into the soil.

Vinyl chloride can be a risk to human health if people drink water containing the chemical or breathe the chemical in gas form at high levels. However, the groundwater at this site is not used for drinking or any other purpose and the soils are covered with asphalt and concrete.

In addition to testing the groundwater, we tested the soil gas at eight places in April 2003. Samples at one location showed vinyl chloride at 72 parts per billion by volume at 4 feet below ground, and 150 parts per billion by volume at 8 feet below ground. These are levels that could pose a risk if people breathe the soil gas (vapor) over a long period of time. However, the asphalt and concrete over the soils prevents this direct contact.

## **Possible health effects of vinyl chloride**

Vinyl chloride is a chemical that is a gas at room temperature. It has a mild, sweet odor. Vinyl chloride is a breakdown product of chlorinated solvents used by Safety-Kleen. It may cause a variety of health effects at high concentrations.

The following information is a general summary of possible health effects of vinyl chloride. It comes from the U.S. Public Health

Services Agency for Toxic Substance Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Breathing vinyl chloride at high levels (many times higher than the levels found in the soil at this site) can cause dizziness, headaches, sleepiness, or fainting. Most of the studies on long-term (a year or longer) exposure to vinyl chloride were done with workers that make or use vinyl chloride. Workers who breathe vinyl chloride for long periods of time may suffer liver damage, including liver cancer.

## **History of Safety-Kleen's operations**

The former Safety-Kleen service station operated from 1977 to 1991. Their clients were businesses such as automotive shops and dry cleaners. They stored and shipped cleaning solvents, which included chemicals such as TCE (trichloroethylene). The solvents were stored in containers and underground tanks until being sent to a recycle center. Safety-Kleen stored and shipped both new and "used" cleaning solvents. Used solvents are considered to be "hazardous waste." Our agency regulated this facility's storage and handling of the hazardous waste.

In 1993 and 1994, Safety-Kleen closed the facility. Soil samples taken from the tank area contained solvents and petroleum hydrocarbons known as mineral spirits. According to federal and state law, Safety-Kleen is responsible to investigate the site under a program known as a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act Corrective Action Program.

## **We plan more tests at the site**

We will do further investigations to find out more about the chemicals and determine if there is a human health risk. To do this we will take more samples of the soil, soil gas, and groundwater in and around the site within the next 6 to 8 months. Once we have a full understanding of the site, we will put out a proposed cleanup plan for public review and comment.

## **More information at our agency's office**

We invite you to learn more about what is happening at the former Safety-Kleen, Inc. Service Center site. The reports and other information are at our agency's office at 5796 Corporate Avenue in Cypress. Please call Julie Johnson in the File Room at (714) 484-5337 to make an appointment. File Room hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

## **Who to call at our agency**

If you have questions about the site, please call or e-mail either of these two people at our agency (the Department of Toxic Substances Control):

Leticia Hernandez  
Public Participation Specialist  
(714) 484-5488  
E-mail: [lhernand@dtsc.ca.gov](mailto:lhernand@dtsc.ca.gov)

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## **Media Inquiries**

Jeanne Garcia  
Public Information Officer  
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### **Notice to the Hearing Impaired**

You can obtain additional information by using the California State Relay Service at 1-888-877-5378 (TDD). Ask them to contact Leticia Hernandez at (714) 484-5488.



*State of California*  
Department of Toxic Substances Control  
Leticia Hernandez  
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**INSIDE: INFORMATION ON THE FORMER SAFETY-KLEEN INC. SERVICE CENTER  
LOS ALAMITOS, CALIFORNIA**