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REPORTS

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New Mexico Press Clipping Bureau
Albuquerque, N. M.

Failure To Get Grant Match Threatens Water Well Plan

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

MONUMENT — Failure of the Monument Water Users' Association to qualify for county funds has placed the community's new water well proposal on stormy seas, a project engineer said.

If the association fails to locate \$40,000 in additional funding, Lea County's first community with what was the only known above ground source of water will be unable to meet its water needs.

Currently, the association's single, clean water well is unable to supply enough water to meet the community's future needs, associate engineer Debra Hicks said. Hicks works for Pettigrew and Associates, which is designing the water project.

Hicks said there currently is no well project until the association can come up with money to match a state Community Development Council grant.

Monument has 120 days to come up with the \$40,000 needed to match last week's CDC grant. Failure to do so results in loss of the grant.

Lea County serves as agent for the Water Users' Association grant from the CDC.

In 1984, the CDC appropriated an additional \$85,000 in emergency funding for the project.

On Tuesday, Lea County commissioners rejected an association request for \$40,000 to match the grant because commissioners said the county cannot allocate funds to private entities.

Monument "is in a bind right now," Hicks said.

"Monument has to pull together and figure out where to get the money to match the grant."

Water Association President W.E. Copeland said the association will ask oil companies operating in the area and the Farmer's Home Administration for assistance matching the CDC grant.

The association "is in pretty sad shape," he explained.

Additionally, the group will not know for a few more days if it can locate additional sources of funding for the project, "and we'll have to go cussin' and cryin' for that," he said.

Copeland said the current well and pump cannot meet the community's demand once people begin watering their lawns during the summer.

He said the association will need another pump if the new well project does not get under way soon, which will be expensive.

Monument's problems began last September when one of two wells began pumping water contaminated with crude oil. A nearby pipeline was discovered to be leaking two days later.

Oil contamination of the water supply forced Monument to shut down the contaminated well and use its remaining clean well.

Further complicating the situation was the Environmental Improvement Division's discovery of another, older oil contamination near the second well.

The new well project includes drilling a second well

north of Monument outside the area's oilfields, a pump for the well and a transmission line to the community. The project will cost about \$165,000.

Copeland said he "wishes somebody had more money than sense and could give us some."

But he added, "We have 120 days and will come up with money from somewhere."

AMAR 26 1988

Mexico Press Clipping Bureau
Albuquerque, N. M.

Commission Rejects Group's Funding Bid

LOVINGTON — County commissioners today rejected a funding request by the Monument Waters Users Association to match a state Community Development Council grant for a new water system.

Commissioners, acting on a recommendation from County Attorney Richard Darnell, said the county is prohibited by law from granting public monies for a private entity, even though it is incorporated as a non-profit association to maintain and operate a water service.

Monument has had ongoing problems with crude oil contamination in its water supply from a fall oil pipeline leak and older oil well leaks. Last week, the village of Monument was awarded \$40,000 in Community Development Council funds toward a \$165,000 project to revamp the community's water supply and drill new wells.

Community Development Council member Johnny Cope said last week the CDC is governed by the same rules as the county and so made the grant to the village of Monument instead of the Water Users Association.

Last year, the CDC awarded \$85,000 in emergency funds to assist with the project.

Deborah Hicks of Pettigrew & Associates, the firm that is handling the project for the water users group, told commissioners about \$42,000 is needed in matching funds in about 120 days to be able to get the CDC grant.

If the water users group fails to get that match, she said, the rest of the grant will be lost.

Darnell told commissioners the only way the county, which was

looked at applying for a Farmers Home Administration loan, but if it does, the cost of the project would rise because FHA requires meters and a complete environmental study.

Commissioner Buddy Westbrook of Hobbs suggested the Monument group assess water users right-of-way fees. But a member of a small group of Monument petitioners said most of the users are renters, who "are barely scratching along," and cannot afford the fees. The spokesman also said property owners in the area also say they can't afford the fees.

Westbrook said there are several ways the problem can be handled without coming to the county for help. Among them, he suggested putting in a water station and selling water. The closest water station, he said, is at the Arkansas Junction, and he said a "big waterflood project" is going into the area south of Monument. "The county has no

business in the utility business," Westbrook said. Commissioner Pat McCasland of Eunice said he does not like the idea of using tax dollars on a private well. "That oil in the water belongs to someone and not the people of Lea County...a lot of oil companies are drilling in the area and they are a lot more liable than the county," McCasland said. "There is a fault somewhere."

Westbrook said none of the oil companies are going to admit being at fault because "you're talking about liability."

Commission Chairman Ernie McNutt of Lovington said perhaps oil companies could be persuaded to get together to put up the matching money with an eye to avoiding a lawsuit. He stressed this is his personal speculation, "but it's pretty good reasoning."

McCasland also said if the water users group were to set up a business operation, they might be able to apply to the county for funds from the

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McCasland also said if the water users group were to set up a business operation, they might be able to apply to the county for funds from the

Southeastern New Mexico Economic Development District, which grants public funds to private companies to stimulate economic growth.

Hicks indicated the group would start exploring the idea of contracting oil companies involved in work in that area.

Hobbs Daily News-Sun

SEP 13 1994

New Mexico Press Clipping Bureau

FOR MONUMENT

Officials Planning Temporary Well

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

State officials are developing a contingency plan for Monument's water supply system in the event an oil leak that contaminated the town's water supply in September moves into the town's two good wells.

The plan involves connecting a new water well to the present system. The well was recently drilled north of the site where oil contaminated the town's water supply, which is located north of the Monument schoolhouse.

Currently, oil floats on top of the ground water about 120 feet from the good wells, data from monitor wells shows.

Although the officials say data from the monitor wells shows the oil skim appears to be stationary, they want to be able to avoid an emergency situation

should the town's two good wells become contaminated, the officials said.

The two good wells are southeast of the oil contamination. Groundwater in the area flows toward the southeast.

In September, when heavy oil vapors seeped from Monument faucets following contamination of the town's water supply possibly from an oil pipeline leak, National Guardsman trucked water to the town.

And then, while monitoring the first contamination site, state officials located a 20-to-30-year-old site of oil contamination possibly from an old casing leak.

Should Monument's water supply system become contaminated again from either of the two groundwater contamination

Continued on Page 2

sites, an alternative to hauling water to the community will be available to residents, Hobbs Oil Conservation Division Manager Jerry Sexton said.

The new well, when tested, showed no signs of oil contamination with water available at a rate more than 45 gallons per second, Sexton said.

Water was pumped from the backup well for about four hours with a 45-gallon-per-hour pump and showed no draw-down of the water table, Sexton said.

Before the contingency plan can be put into effect, however, it must be approved by Environmental Improvement Division officials to insure water quality is acceptable for human consumption, Sexton said.

In addition to the new well, the Oil Conservation Division has drilled four monitor wells around the town's two good wells currently supplying the Monument Water Users Association with water, Sexton said, to detect any movement of the spill toward the two good wells.

City of Monument Battles Crude Oil in Water Supply

By Judy Giannettino

ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

MONUMENT, N.M. — It was not the way residents of this southeastern New Mexico hamlet had hoped to discover oil.

But in mid-September, the thick, gooey black substance slowly began seeping into one of the village's two water wells.

The oil never made it through residents' home faucets but "strong gas vapors" drifted into houses and "we knew we had a problem," Monument Water Users Association president W.E. Copeland recalled recently.

The problem Monument residents detected Sept. 14 turned out to be crude petroleum containing "explosive levels of hydrocarbons," said Dennis McQuillan, a water resource specialist with the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division in Santa Fe.

No serious health problems resulted from the Monument water contamination, but McQuillan and other state officials said "historical practices" in oil-rich southeastern New Mexico raise concerns over whether similar accidents could occur within the area.

"There is evidence of contamination throughout the area," McQuillan said. "That doesn't mean the water will become infiltrated with the crude, but we are watching the situation closely."

Richard Holland, EID deputy director in Santa Fe, said ground water contamination by hydrocarbons is possible in any area that has "that much oil and that much drilling activity, which has been going on for over the past 30 years."

In Monument, the affected water well slightly north of the village was shut down as soon as the problem was discovered, Holland said.

National Guard troops initially provided clean drinking water for the 72 families served by the well,

which, along with one other village well, was operated by the Water Users Association.

The second well, aided by a dormant well reactivated after the accident, currently is providing water to Monument residents, Holland said. Those wells "remain clean to this date," he said.

But a new well must be drilled quickly and must be placed "clearly outside of the area where there is petroleum product contamination" to guard against a repeat of the September problem, Holland said.

McQuillan said officials believe a break in an oil pipeline owned by Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co. was partially responsible for the recent contamination.

A Sept. 18 sampling of water from the tainted well showed it contained 7.2 milligrams per liter of benzene, a "known carcinogenic," McQuillan said. He said state health standards allow for only 0.01 milligrams per liter for benzene, which has been known to

cause leukemia.

"There were explosive levels of hydrocarbons in that water well's casing," McQuillan said, adding that a more recent sampling revealed benzene levels of 2.5 milligrams per liter.

Other contamination in the area is possible, he said, because "there are hydrocarbons in the ground water about 120 feet away from the well (currently in use)."

That, coupled with past ground water contamination, probably means the pipeline break was not the only contributing factor to the recent problem, McQuillan said.

"These problems are not unique to Monument," he said, explaining that, in the 1950s, several oil well casing leaks occurred in the area.

A similar problem also occurred in western Hobbs, 13 miles northeast of Monument, shortly after World War II, McQuillan said. Area residents discovered oil floating atop their water table — the oil apparently from oil well casing leaks, he said.

'Historical practices' raise concern about water

Village of Monument finds oil slowly seeping into two wells

By JUDY GIANNETTINO
Associated Press Writer
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Dennis McQuillan, EID

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"The people got smart one day and started pumping out the oil and selling it — just skimming it off the top," he said. "That's how the Windmill Oil Co. got started, and from just skimming off the oil, the company has gotten 335,000 barrels of oil."

Because they are aware of the "historical practices" in the area and because brine contamination also is a problem in this corner of the state, Holland, McQuillan and officials with the New Mexico Oil Conservation Division closely monitor ground water in southeastern New Mexico.

State Officials Begin Planning To Replace Monument's Well

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

State officials met in Hobbs today to begin the process of replacing Monument's contaminated water well.

Officials and consulting engineer Ray Hohstadt of Pettigrew & Associates estimated a new well and transmission line could be completed by the end of July to replace Monument Water Users Association's well, which was contaminated by oil last September.

The contamination was detected when association President W.E. Copeland found oil vapors in the system's water and located a leak in a Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co. pipeline near the contaminated well.

The replacement well will probably be drilled north of Monument on state land outside oil producing areas, Hohstadt said.

He said the plans and design of the well could be completed by Jan. 30 if the state approves the transfer of water rights to the association and a water-producing location can be found quickly.

But Environmental Improvement Division repre-

sentative Gus Cordova said it first must be determined a new site for the well will not be susceptible to future contamination.

He said the EID will review plans for the new system to avoid future contamination problems.

"We want to run with the project and build the system as soon as possible," Cordova said, "but we don't want to run so fast we design a project where two to three years down the road we will have a similar problem."

Future oil contamination of Monument's water system became a factor earlier this month when monitor wells drilled around the site of the original contaminated well showed a second site of ground water tainted by oil.

The most recently discovered contamination, officials said, may have resulted from oil wells drilled 20 to 30 years ago.

Copeland said the second site of contamination is about 280 feet from one of the association's good wells.

To replace the contaminated well, the state Commu-

(Continued On Page 2)

Daily News-Sun, Hobbs, New Mexico—Tues., Nov. 27, 1984—Page 2

Continued from Page 1

State Officials Begin

nity Development Council last week approved \$85,000 in emergency funds for the association's well, expecting the well's total cost to be shared, council member Johnny Cope said.

Although liability for the contamination has not been determined, Texas-New Mexico Pipeline's district manager, B.L. Lednicky, said the company is willing to

help replace the well with a similar system but should not be required to assume full costs to replace the well with a system originating farther away than the current system.

State Oil Conservation Division officials said liability for oil contamination of Monument's water system should be determined after all data from monitor wells is available, possibly within a few weeks.

Major Tax

Holds Daily News-Sun
10-09-84

MONUMENT WATER County Commission Declares 'Emergency'

By BRENDA MASENGILL
Of The News-Sun Staff

LOVINGTON — Lea County Commission members today declared the contaminated Monument water system an "emergency situation" and agreed to sponsor an application for emergency funding to correct the problem.

Civil engineer Ray Halsted of Pettigrew and Associates told commissioners a proposal will be presented to the state to drill a new well farther north of the present contaminated well or seek to purchase water from an approved water system in the area.

The state also must declare the

situation an emergency to receive emergency funds, Halsted said.

One of two wells belonging to the Monument Well Users Cooperative recently was found to contain contaminants, Halsted said, resulting from an oil pipeline leak.

Seventy-two families are served by the community's water system, said Halsted.

Should the second well become contaminated, "it will be a serious situation," requiring the hauling of between "15,000 and 20,000 gallons of water a day," he said.

The cost to drill a new well and install a pipeline to deliver the water to Monument residents is estimated "between \$140,000 and \$150,000," according to Halsted.

Negotiating a wholesale water contract with an approved water system in the area is estimated to cost "between \$65,000 and \$70,000."

Halsted recommended applying for emergency funds rather than Community Development Block Grant monies because of the time element involved in receiving financial assistance.

"With regular a CDBG application, we may not get the money until January," he said.

pc John Guinn, Roswell
Tom Burt, Carlsbad
Dennis McQuillan, Santa Fe ✓
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LIQUID WASTE/GROUND WATER
SURVEILLANCE

Hobbs Daily News-Sun

Thurs., Sept. 27, 1984—

IN MONUMENT

Well Samples Show Water Table Tainted

By TERRY SHOLIN

Of The News-Sun Staff

Crude oil in "extremely high concentrations" has seeped into the water table around a Monument Water Users Association water well, a local environmentalist said.

Crude oil has "thoroughly coated the surface of the water in the water table," said Garrison McCaslin, an environmentalist with the Hobbs office of the state's Environmental Improvement District.

McCaslin said he now is concerned about the crude oil possibly flowing along the water table to the association's other active well, which is about a half-mile "down stream" along the flow of the ground water from the spill site.

One-eighth to one-tenth of an inch of crude oil was found floating on the surface of the water when McCaslin and a chemist with Texaco Inc., William Deever, tested the water with special equipment Deever brought with him from the company's Port Arthur Laboratory. Texaco is the parent company of Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co., the company which owns the six-inch pipeline that was discovered to be leaking on Sept. 17.

A verbal report from the Environmental Improvement Division's Albuquerque laboratory shows crude oil component chemicals were in the water well in extremely high concentrations, McCaslin said.

He listed them as follows: Benzene — 7,000 parts per billion parts of water, polulene — 7,000 parts per billion, ethylbenzene — 3,500 parts per billion. In addition, other crude oil components were found in smaller concentrations, he said.

The danger to human health comes from the toxicity of the chemicals. Short-term consumption of water with significant oil contamination causes nausea and digestive problems, McCaslin said. Long-term consumption of water with small amounts of oil contamination can be carcinogenic, he said.

McCaslin said the Environmental Improvement Division will continue to check the good well every two weeks for the next year to make sure it does not pump oil from the spill, in addition to monitoring the crude oil in the water table.

The concern is spills like this
(Continued on Page 2)

cc John Guinn, HPM II, Roswell
Tom Burt, HPM I, Carlsbad/Hobbs
Dennis McQuillan, Groundwater Section,
Santa Fe
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Well Samples Show

spread, McCaslin said, but the other well has failed to show any signs of crude oil so far.

"We're holding our fingers crossed, and only time will tell" if the spill will flow along the water table to the clean well, Monument Water Users Association President W.E. Copeland said. The association serves 72 households in the Monument area.

The association's water system was shut down for about three days last week following the contamination of one of the association's two active water wells.

However, the state's Oil Conservation Division officials say they have not determined if the pipeline leak is the source of the water table contamination.

Basin

County's count dropped one for a total of seven rigs.

Yoakum County recorded the loss of one to finish the week with five rigs. Chaves County's count gained up for three working rigs.

Elsewhere in Eastern New Mexico counties reporting activity were Mora and Quay, each with one operating rig.

Wildcat drilling activity also is reported for El Paso County where one unit is working.

The Oil Conservation Division, which regulates New Mexico's oil industry, will drill 4 to 6 wells around the site of the oil spill to make sure the crude in the water did not come from another source, the division's local manager, Jerry Sexton, said.

One of the test wells will be drilled between the spill and the town's clean well to monitor the flow of the spill, Sexton said.

He also said the pipeline company failed to violate any laws in connection with the spill. The company has hauled the oil-soaked soil from the area to an approved oil industry dump and is filling the spill site with sand.

The pipeline company's district manager, Barney Lednicky, said the company has not decided what to do about the contaminated water well but is working toward a decision on whether to drill a new water well.

"We hope to have it taken care of pretty quickly and are working with the local people and the Oil Conservation Division."

The company has cleaned up the spill as best it can, McCaslin said, but there is no way to clean up the water table.

The Monument Water Users Association is checking into the possibility of reactivating an older well near the clean school house well to replace the contaminated well, Copeland said.

Well Contamination Corrected

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA FE — State officials said Monday that the water system in the Lea County community of Monument is back in operation after being contaminated last week by oil seepage.

The water system and the storage tank serving the 300 residents of Monument were contaminated early last week when the community water well began pumping a mixture of water and light hydrocarbons and gas, which are components of crude oil.

The Governor's Office authorized use of National Guard tank trucks from Hobbs to haul drinking water to the community. John Ramming, special projects aide for Gov. Toney Anaya, said Monday that the National Guard hauled only one tankload of water to Monument last Wednesday.

Gus Cordova, with the Water Supply Section of the Environmental Improvement Division, said the contaminated well was disconnected from the system and residents now are getting

water from another well at the Monument school.

"The well at the school has better production than the well they were using for the community water system," Cordova said.

Fresh water from the school well was used to flush out the storage tank and the water system, he said.

"The assumption is the contamination came from a leak in a crude-oil pipeline," Cordova said. "There is a pipeline approximately 150 feet from the well. A leak in the pipeline had contaminated a great deal of soil in the area."

Dick Stamets, director of the state Oil Conservation Division, said it is assumed the pipeline leak was the source of the water well contamination but that tests will be conducted on nearby oil wells.

Stamets said the pipeline company repaired the leak and then excavated all soil to the limits of the crude oil seepage from the leak and replaced it with clean soil. He said the leak was not discovered from a routine aerial survey of the pipeline because

there were heavy weeds growing in the area of the leak.

Cordova said there was no visible contamination of the water from crude oil. The contamination was discovered after residents complained about the odor, he said.

Stamets said water from the well was tested Friday and the monitoring devices recorded significantly reduced gas content.

"We have instituted a Bradenhead survey on nearby producing wells," he said.

Officials want to make certain that it was the pipeline leak that caused the problem and not subsurface leaks from one of the nearby oil wells. The Bradenhead survey will determine whether any of the wells are leaking gas into the space between the surface casing and the production casing, Stamets said.

Cordova said the school well produces 110 gallons of water a minute, compared with the 23-gallon capacity of the other well.

"It can provide water until they see what they want to do with the existing well," Cordova said.

Monument Water Problem Solved

SANTA FE (AP) — The water system in the Lea County community of Monument is back in operation but officials still are attempting to trace the source of the contamination which shut it down briefly last week.

The water system and the storage tank serving the 300 residents of Monument were contaminated early last week when the community water well began pumping a mixture of water and light hydrocarbons and gas which are components of crude oil.

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HOBBS Daily News-Sun

HOBBS, NEW MEXICO 88240 THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 1984



MONUMENT INSPECTION — Lea County Commissioner Bill Johnson and environmentalist Gary McCaslin, with the Environmental Improvement Division

in Hobbs, examine the pipeline that leaked oil near a Monument water well. Clean-up of the site will continue for a couple more days. — Staff Photo by Bob Smith

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SEP 21 1984

POS. 111

Water Again Drinkable

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

MONUMENT — The water here is again safe to drink, a Hobbs environmentalist said.

The Monument Water Users Association system, which was contaminated by an oil pipeline leak earlier in the week, has been reactivated and the water is potable, environmentalist Gary McCaslin said. McCaslin is with the local office of the state Environmental Improvement Division.

McCaslin said he tasted and sampled the water yesterday and detected no remnants of the crude oil that contaminated one of the association's two wells.

The samples from the water system were sent to the EID's scientific laboratory in Albuquerque. McCaslin said he was sure the samples would show no or extremely low amounts of volatile chemicals.

The water users association has "done a good job of cleaning up the system," he said.

The EID will continue to monitor the system for about a month to insure no further contamination occurs, he said.

The Monument Water Users Association serves about 70 people in the Monument area.

But the contaminated well will

(Continued on Page 2)

Water Again Drinkable •••

remain shut down until the water from it proves to be clean enough to drink. The EID will monitor the contaminated well for a year, McCaslin said.

"One of the associations two wells is possibly ruined," association President W.E. Copeland said. But

the one good well will be able to serve the customers, he said.

On Tuesday, the Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co., which operates the six-inch pipeline that was found leaking oil, was scraping off and hauling away the oil-soaked dirt. The company also is replacing the leaking pipeline.

The dirt is hauled to Pollution Control along the Hobbs-Carlsbad highway near the Lea County line, an Oil Conservation Division approved dump for the oil industry. The company will file a report on the situation with the OCD later.

The water table in the area is 40 feet below the surface of the ground. An Oil Conservation Division official said the oil never did actually get in the water.

The water was contaminated by fumes from the oil, OCD Field Representative Ed Sea said. Whether the oil has soaked below the calichi in the area will not be known for a few more days. The Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co. yesterday was unable to cut through the calichi with a backhoe, Sea said.

But McCaslin said he would not know if oil contaminated the water or just fumes until the test results were back from the EID laboratory.

The company also was hauling in sand to replace the oil-soaked dirt and to soak up some of the oil.

Wednesday, McCaslin accredited the quick response to the water well problem to the pipeline company and W.E. Copeland.

"Everybody is doing all they can," Copeland said. "The Oil Conservation Division, the environmentalists and the oil company are all working together very nicely."

Hobbs Daily News-Sun

HOBBS, NEW MEXICO 88240

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Monument's Water System May Be Flowing Again Soon

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

MONUMENT — An oil pipeline leak that seeped into the Monument water supply was being cleaned up today, and officials say the town's water system should be back in operation in a few days.

"We caught it early and the cleanup effort was as fast as it could be," said Gary McCaslin, an EID spokesman in Hobbs.

The water system is being flushed out and the cleaning process could take three to five days, he said. McCaslin checked the water system today to determine if it would be useable soon.

Water from a well was contaminated when a Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co. pipeline running past the water well site began leaking oil, authorities said.

The company is cleaning up the oil-soaked dirt and hauling it to a dumping ground, local Oil Conservation Division Manager Jerry Sexton said. Other water wells within a mile of the leaking pipeline also would be tested for contamination, he said.

The well is one of two belonging to the Monument Water Users Association. The association serves 72 families.

The affected families have been getting fresh water since Tuesday from National Guard trucks set up at the Monument Cafe and from neighbors.

McCaslin said the water from the contaminated well probably contained a high amount of hydrocarbons that could cause nausea and digestive problems with short-term exposure. In small amounts over several years, exposure to hydrocarbons in drinking water is carcinogenic, he said.

But in Monument, the problem was caught early enough to avoid major health hazards, McCaslin said.

"It's pretty unusual for a New Mexico water system to go into the oil business," said John Ramming, special projects aide for Gov. Toney Anaya. "I suppose that's one of the options to look at — to finance a new system."

Mike Pindle, a Monument resident, said, "Everybody's got water. People with their own wells are sharing it."

McCaslin said his office began receiving calls about the contamination on Monday. He said one call came from a resident complaining about the water and the other came from an official with the water users association.

McCaslin said he credited quick action by the association's president, W.E. Copeland, and the pipeline company with preventing a more hazardous situation.

The company is removing excess oil from the ground,

(Continued on Page 2)

Monument's Water System . . .

but "we don't know the extent of it yet," McCaslin said.

"It's quite a lot and covered a couple of acres," he said. "It takes a certain amount of time to soak down 40 feet to the water table — if in fact it did."

"We don't know whether actual quantities of oil got on the surface of the water," he said.

The contaminated well has been shut down and McCaslin said he estimated it would be at least a couple of years before it can be used again.

The remaining well, the larger of the two, should be

able to provide most of the community's water needs, McCaslin said.

Water samples have been sent to the EID's scientific laboratory division in Albuquerque and test results should be available in two or three days, he said.

"We won't know what all is in the water until we get the results back," McCaslin said. "It's high priority."

The EID will test for ions, total dissolved solids and hydrocarbons in the contaminated well water.

cc John Guinn, HPM II, Roswell
Tom Burt, HPM I, Carlsbad/Hobbs
Dennis McQuillan, Groundwater, Santa Fe ✓
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SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO -- State Environmental Improvement Division officials are investigating the source of hydrocarbon contaminants detected in the public water supply system in Monument, New Mexico early this week.

EID officials were notified Monday by Monument's water supply system operators who received complaints from residents of strong odors and taste found in the drinking water. Testing done at the well showed concentrations of hydrocarbons were present and exceeded safe drinking water levels. The contaminated well has been shut off, and Monument residents presently are using water from an alternate source.

EID Director Denise Fort is working with the Department of Energy and Minerals Oil Conservation Division to find the source of the hydrocarbon contamination. "Leaking oil and gas wells are the probable cause of the contamination," Fort said.

According to Fort, a report being prepared by EID documents widespread groundwater contamination from oil and gas activities in Lea County. In Monument, which is located in the Monument-Jal oilfield, the report

(more)

identifies a stock well which has been pumping crude oil for the past 5 years.

EID official Gustavo Cordova said EID had taken samples at the Monument water supply well in April, but found no hydrocarbon contamination. Cordova said results of further samples taken this week should determine which specific hydrocarbons are present in the water supply.

In addition, the EID Hobbs Field Office will test the alternate water supply to determine if the water is safe to drink. Water systems operators are also flushing the water tank and water lines supplying residents' water to remove existing contamination in the system. The National Guard has been alerted and is standing by to provide fresh water to the residents, if needed, while the water is being analysed and safe drinking water levels are established.

IN MONUMENT

Leaking Oil Pipeline Contaminates Water

By TERRY SHOLIN
Of The News-Sun Staff

A Texas-New Mexico Co. oil pipeline near Monument has leaked oil into a town water well about 250 yards from the leaking pipeline, contaminating the town's water supply and making it undrinkable.

Residents of the Monument area served by the Monument Water Users Association are being asked not to drink the water because of the toxicity caused by the oil contamination.

The contaminated well is shut down and the pipes are being flushed with water from a second well about a half mile from the contaminated well. By the end of the week, the water supply system could be clean enough to use with water coming from the second well, Monument Fire Chief W.E. Copeland said today.

A few residents began complaining about a faint taste of oil in their water Friday night, Copeland said, and Saturday and Sunday more complaints came in.

When Copeland examined the contaminated well, he said he could smell oil at the well site. About a 25-acre plot of land had oil on top of the ground, he said.

Early this morning, members of the local office of the state Oil Conservation Commission and Copeland located the leaking pipeline.

The six-inch leaking pipeline was to be repaired this morning, said Lonnie Nusz, an assistant district manager with Texas-New Mexico Pipeline Co.

Leaking pipelines are routine in the oil fields, Copeland said, but this is the first time one has contami-

(Continued on Page 2)

nated the Monument water supply. "I hope it's the last time," he said.

The Army National Guard from Hobbs this morning took a water truck to the Monument Cafe. The National Guard water truck will be there until 6 p.m. this evening and again at 8 a.m. tomorrow if needed,

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Staff Sgt. Gilbert Espinosa said. Residents were filling containers from the truck today.

One Monument resident, Sandy Aoussat, said, "It's a bad surprise, but it's a time when we all have to pull together." She said Pengo Well Servicing was trucking in additional barrels of water for animals and other sanitary uses, while Pemco of New Mexico hauled the barrels back out.

The Hobbs office of the Environmental Improvement District took water samples from the contaminated well this morning and were sending them to Santa Fe for testing on a priority one rating, local EID environmentalist Garrison McCaslin said.

The immediate concern is the possibility of nausea and digestive problems caused from drinking the water, McCaslin said.

Judging from a preliminary review of the site, McCaslin said it could be a long time before the contaminated well could be used for drinking water.

At the site of the leak, oil could be seen oozing from the ground. "In some gopher holes near the leak, you can see oil running through the ground," Copeland said.

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