

Contaminated groundwater near York closer than first thought

By The Associated Press

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YORK — Contractors have found that contaminated groundwater stemming from an empty missile silo five miles from York has spread closer to the city than originally thought.

New wells were dug Wednesday to determine exactly how far the contamination has traveled.

“Initially, it was thought that the plume reached a one-half mile from the old missile silo, at the furthest,” said Danny Robinson, a project scientist for Kemron, the company testing the groundwater.

“Now, we see that it has moved 4½ miles. I don’t think anyone thought it was going to reach this far or this near the city of York.”

A test well will also be installed at the edge of the source of York’s drinking water.

The Atlas missile site stopped operating in 1964, four years after it was built. In 2002, an investigation by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers found TCE, or trichloroethene, a chlorinated solvent, had been released into the environment.

The substance was used at the site to clean out fuel lines.

The study concluded that groundwater underneath and around the silo had TCE concentrations exceeding regulatory standards of five parts per million.

It also concluded that nearby domestic and municipal water wells were not affected, but tests on 21 private wells closer to town indicated the spread.

“In this area, we’ve discovered some readings of 3.6 and nearly 4 ppm (parts per million), so the contamination is here although it’s still below the maximum allowable limit,” Robinson said.

Once the spread has been fully measured, the next step will be to clean it up. Robinson said several ideas on how to do that have been discussed.

Full-scale cleanup is planned to begin in 2007.