

# **DRINKING WATER AT THE FORMER FORT ORD FACT SHEET AUGUST 2003**

## **The Water/Aquifer System**

Drinking water for the former Fort Ord comes from two naturally-occurring underground water storage areas (called "aquifers") which are located on the former military base.

In 1984, the Army installed three wells in the aquifers — one that draws water from 300-400 feet underground, and two that draw water from 300-500 feet underground.

Before water from these aquifers actually reaches housing or facilities on the former Fort Ord, it is pumped into a collective distribution system where water from all three wells is blended together and treated with chlorine.

The Fort Ord water system was transferred to the Marina Coast Water District (MCWD) in 2001. MCWD also provides water for residents and facilities in the City of Marina. The City's water supply comes from different wells located outside the former Fort Ord.

## **Water Treatment and Monitoring**

Water treatment and monitoring is required by state and federal law.

Wells serving the former Fort Ord, and those serving the City of Marina, are routinely monitored for water quality by MCWD using the state and federal water quality standards. Wells serving the former Fort Ord are also regularly monitored by the Army.

All water contains some levels of contaminants, such as minerals, and in some cases other substances which are known to have potential health risks at certain concentrations and/or with prolonged exposure. State and federal standards dictate what is/is not allowed in drinking water and the levels (amounts) of contaminants that are permitted.

These amounts are called "Maximum Contaminant Levels" (MCLs), described as "parts per million" or "parts per billion" in water.

In June 2002, a contaminant called trichloroethylene ("TCE") was found in one of the three water supply wells at the former Fort Ord. TCE is a cleaning solvent. The contamination is coming from landfills near Imjin Road which were formerly used by the Army but are now closed. The Army has responded to the landfill contamination problem by installing extensive cleanup systems to remove the contamination and prevent its further migration. The Army has also been monitoring groundwater quality at the former Fort Ord for a number of years to understand the location and movement of groundwater contamination caused by the closed landfills.

## **Meets State and Federal Drinking Water Standards — Safe to Drink**

The amount of TCE found in the one well was barely detectable at 0.53 parts per billion. State and federal standards allow a Maximum Contaminant Level for TCE of 5.0 parts per billion. It is difficult to accurately and consistently detect TCE below 0.50 parts per billion. Detection of TCE, even at the low concentration of 0.53 parts per billion, was reported, as required by law, to the California Department of Health Services (DHS). No additional action was deemed necessary by the DHS because the concentration levels are well below 5.0 parts per billion. Both the Army and MCWD have been regularly monitoring the Fort Ord wells to see whether traces of TCE continue to exist. No TCE was detected in the most recent monitoring done in July 2003.

Over the past year, fluctuations in the readings have ranged from a current low of no detected parts per billion to a high of 0.81 parts per billion, still substantially below the standard of 5.0 parts per billion.

As was noted earlier, before water is distributed to housing and facilities at the former Fort Ord, water from the one well is being blended with water from the other wells that do not have traces of TCE.

Blending is an approved method for diluting contaminants. In this case, blending can serve as an extra precautionary assurance.

The detected TCE level is already very low and is well within the mandated state and federal standards. In addition, the MCWD has voluntarily reduced pumping of water from the affected well.

The Army and MCWD are continuing to monitor the affected well, and all other wells, for TCE and/or any other contaminants on a regular basis. Meanwhile, the drinking water supply at the former Fort Ord remains completely safe to drink.

*This information has been prepared by the U.S. Army-Fort Ord Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Field Office, in conjunction with: Marina Coast Water District, Monterey County Department of Health, California Department of Health Services, California Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Department of Toxic Substances Control and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

If you have questions or would like more information about drinking water at the former Fort Ord, please contact Melissa Hlebasko at 393-1284 or any of the following agencies:

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