

# Moffett Community Housing UPDATE



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Moffett Field, California

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## Introduction

The U.S. Navy has been investigating the groundwater under Moffett Community Housing in Mountain View, California. This housing area includes both Orion Park and Wescoat Housing. The investigations were needed because chemicals known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were found in the water under Moffett Community Housing in the late 1980s and the 1990s.

The groundwater at Moffett Community Housing is not used for drinking, irrigation, or other household purposes. For this reason, the VOCs in the groundwater do not pose a health risk to residents through ingestion, bathing, or other skin contact. The water that is used in the housing areas

comes from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir in the Sierra Nevadas, and it is treated to meet all state and federal drinking water standards.

Because VOCs evaporate easily, we know there is a possibility that VOCs could be

migrating or moving from the groundwater, through the soil as a gas, and out into the air above.

Air sampling conducted last year found volatile organic compounds, including a chemical called TCE (trichloroethene), in the indoor and outdoor air in Moffett Community Housing. The study results found that there are no immediate or short-term health risks to you, your family or your pets from TCE found in the groundwater under Moffett Community Housing or from VOCs in the air. Some air samples at

Moffett Community Housing have shown levels of VOCs slightly above EPA (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) standards for safe long-term exposure. Long-term exposure is often described as 30 years of continual (24-hours a day, seven days a week) exposure.

The Navy is doing additional air testing to determine whether elevated levels are, in fact, present, where they are, and possible sources. With this information, the Navy can develop the appropriate plan to protect the long-term health of the public. This fact sheet explains the Navy's plans for the additional air sampling that will occur over the next six to eight months.

**The study results found that there are no immediate or short-term health risks to you, your family or your pets from TCE found in the groundwater under Moffett Community Housing or from VOCs in the air.**

## Upcoming Air Sampling

The Navy will be conducting air sampling in November and December of 2003 and again in May and June of 2004. Indoor air samples will be taken in vacant housing units. Outdoor samples will be taken at playgrounds and other common areas. Residents will be informed with a notice on their front doors prior to any sampling near their units. Samples will be collected in small metal canisters, each with a valve and sample tube on top. Sampling activity will present no risk to the residents.

The air samples will be tested for levels of trichloroethene (TCE) and the products that it breaks down into over time. TCE is the VOC that has been found most frequently in the groundwater and at the highest amounts. The air sampling results will help the Navy determine what actions, if any, are needed to protect public health and the environment. The air sampling could also help identify if the TCE is coming from the groundwater or from some other source.

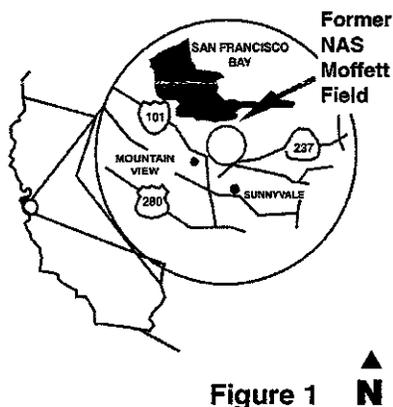


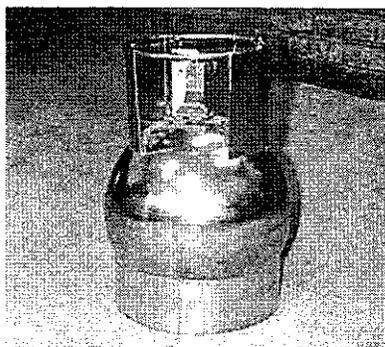
Figure 1





rounds of sampling at each location. The first event will take place in November and December of 2003. The second event is scheduled for May and June of 2004.

During each sampling event, canisters will remain in their sampling locations for a 24-hour period, then removed. The canisters will be placed at the sampling locations again about a week later for another 24-hour period. Each location will be tested twice during each of the two events to identify any changes in air quality. Information about changes in air quality could help identify possible sources of volatile organic compounds and present a more complete picture of overall air quality.



Small metal canisters will collect air samples.

## What Will Residents See?

For indoor air samples, residents may see two or three technicians entering a vacant housing unit and opening windows. This will help air-out the units that may have been sealed shut for many months. The technicians will return 24 hours later to close the windows. Then, 48 hours later, technicians will drop off the air sampling canisters.

Sampling is done this way to improve accuracy. Technicians will return to collect the canisters 24 hours later. The whole process will then be repeated in about a week.

For outdoor air samples, technicians will drop off canisters and small barricades at sampling locations, then collect them in 24 hours. This process will be repeated about a week later.

Technicians will be dressed in civilian clothing and may wear orange safety vests, hard hats and safety glasses. They will drive commercial vans.

If residents have concerns about unidentified individuals in

**The chemicals identified in groundwater under Moffett Community Housing are used in household products including:**  
**paints, paint strippers, and other solvents;**  
**wood preservatives; aerosol sprays; cleansers and disinfectants; moth repellents and air fresheners; stored fuels and automotive products; hobby supplies; and dry cleaning.**  
**Volatile organic compounds are gases that come from these chemicals.**

the housing area, they can ask for identification or contact the Moffett Housing Project Office to confirm the individuals are part of the air sampling team.

## How Can I Improve Air Quality?

VOCs are a group of chemical compounds that have been used for many years because of their useful properties. They have been used as solvents and degreasing cleaners because of their ability to dissolve or rinse away oils and greases easily. They are useful in paints because they thin the paint, making it easy to spread, and then they evaporate so that the paint dries quickly. They are also a component of many fuels such as gasoline and heating oil.

Because they evaporate quickly, VOCs are commonly found in the air. They can get into the air from many sources such as local industrial processes, water treatment, and household products.

You can help improve air quality by properly using and storing household products such as paints, glues, varnishes, waxes, fuel and cleaning, degreasing and hobby products. Also, you can do the following:

- properly dispose of partially full containers of old or unneeded products safely,
- avoid buying extra quantities of these products,
- follow labels carefully,
- use felt tipped markers in well ventilated areas,
- remove plastic covers from dry cleaned garments and allow them to air out before bringing them into your home, and
- use chlorinated products in a well-ventilated area.

## When Will the Results Be Available?

Results from the first air sampling event will be given to all residents in early 2004. A final report, including results

from the second sampling event, will be given to all residents in mid 2004. The final report will describe what additional measures, if any, are needed to prevent long-term health risks at Moffett Community Housing.

### Project Points of Contact

Involving and informing the public is an important part of this project. The Navy's project team is very interested in forming and keeping an open relationship with the residents living in Moffett Community Housing and surrounding communities. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the following project team members:

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*All plans and reports related to the Navy's groundwater studies at Moffett Community Housing are available daily for your review at the Mountain View Public Library, 585 Franklin Street, Mountain View, California.*

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