

Agency admits testing Nemo water too late

■ Officials believe insecticide, fuel was buried at dump sites.

NEMO (AP) - The Forest Service admits it made a mistake by not testing sooner for contaminants in water wells at Nemo, a service official said.

"We started looking at this probably at the end of July in 1994," according to Gled McNitt, a Forest Service spokesman. "The bottom line is we can look back and say we should have tested those wells immediately, but based on information at that time - we didn't test."

Officials believe up to 250 five-gallon containers with a mixture of insecticide and diesel fuel were buried at dump sites in 1975. It had been used to kill

mountain pine beetles in the 1970s. The federal Environmental Protection Agency banned the chemical in 1984 and considers it a potential carcinogen for humans.

Levels of the insecticide that exceed safe drinking water standards were found in seven of 10 wells that were tested last week. Bottled water was provided to affected homes. Officials held a community meeting Wednesday night.

McNitt has said fewer than 30 people live in the potentially affected area Boxelder Creek that flows through Nemo has tested clean of contaminants.

McNitt said the Forest Service began getting funding for the Nemo dump cleanup but the government shutdown in 1995 slowed the process.

"No one knew if we had any money," McNitt said.

"I want to make it clear that this is no excuse," McNitt said. "That was part of the process that we didn't get funding and we didn't test but we should have tested, the funding was not a factor."

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