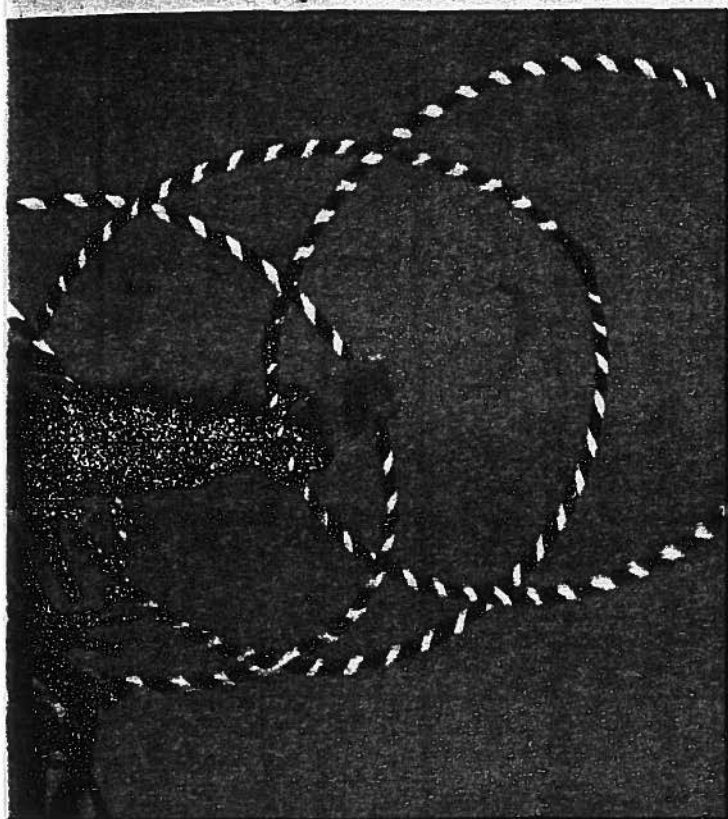


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Journal photo by Johnny Sundby

Featured a drum group, dancers, a style show and storytelling, was coordinated by Patty Swallow and Kelly Hertel of the Horace Mann faculty.

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His partner, California businessman Robert Akers, bought out Lester's share of LA Development, and the two apparently now are competitors.

Lester's family has been in the lodging business in Rapid City for several years with interests in the Quality Inn, the Foothills Motel, the Comfort Inn and the Ramada Inn.

His plans for the motels were unclear, but his associate, Sharon Mayer, said Friday that renovation plans were in the works. Lester was not available for comment Friday.

The move makes the Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn, next to the civic center north of downtown Rapid City, the only Holiday Inn in the Black Hills.

There is a Holiday Inn Express, which opened its doors in February at Cathedral Drive and Mount Rushmore Road. Holiday Inn Express is a franchise motel chain created by Holiday Inn to compete with Days Inn, Quality Inn, Super 8 and other so-called economy motel chains.

A full-blown Holiday Inn must have amenities such as an on-site restaurant, which is not required at a Holiday Inn Express.

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Insecticide found in Nemo wells

By Pat Dobbs
West River Editor

NEMO — The U.S. Forest Service says it is furnishing bottled water to seven Nemo homes after testing this week found traces of a suspected cancer-causing insecticide in water wells.

Other homes and businesses in the vicinity are being contacted. Forest Service spokesman Glen McNitt said fewer than 30 residents might have been exposed.

The discovery came as part of a cleanup of four dumps at the Forest Service Work Center at Nemo. The center is near the Nemo Guest Ranch, historic Nemo Schoolhouse and Nemo Community Church.

Nearby Boxelder Creek shows no sign of contamination. The Boxelder Job Corps Center, four miles from the Nemo community, is not affected.

A spokeswoman said the water supply for the guest ranch and its restaurant "checked out fine." Nemo Postmaster Barb Troxell said her well had minute amounts of the insecticide but that three neighbors' wells tested clean.

The dumps cover less than a quarter acre behind the work center, out of view from roads. Officials believe 200 to 250 five-gallon containers holding the chemical and diesel fuel mixture are buried there.

The Forest Service and other agencies used the insecticide — ethylene dibromide, EDB — to kill mountain pine beetles in the forest in the 1970s. EDB also was used as a gasoline additive and to fumigate grain and soil.

The Environmental Protection Agency in 1984 banned EDB after it caused cancer in laboratory animals, said EPA toxicologist Chris Weis.

"EPA considers EDB a probable human carcinogen ... although there is no human data," Weis said.

The chemical, at levels found in Nemo, does not taste or smell. Special tests were required to find EDB, which otherwise would not turn up in regular state-required tests, said the Forest Service's McNitt.

The state and federal maximum drinking water level for EDB is 50 parts per trillion. McNitt said Nemo well tests ranged from 300 parts per trillion to 1,300 ppt at the church to 5,000 ppt at one well.

"That's a 100-fold exceedance of the federal standard, so that is what we consider a serious exposure," said Weis. "Steps should be taken to eliminate exposure, and to my understanding, that is being done."

Besides not drinking the water, Weis said, residents at homes with higher EDB concentrations should minimize breathing mists, such as during a shower, doing laundry or washing dishes.

He was not sure levels were high enough to warrant abandoning homes. Weis said a water systems engineer would have to decide if

'That's a 100-fold exceedance of the federal standard, so that is what we consider a serious exposure.'

— EPA toxicologist Chris Weis, on the level of EDB found in one of the contaminated wells

aerating water or installing filters is necessary. Activated carbon, such as used in fish tanks, can remove most organic chemicals, he said.

McNitt said since Tuesday's initial test results were confirmed Thursday, the seven households, including those of Forest Service workers at the center, were given bottled water. He understood that a hazardous materials company hired by the Forest Service also would install filters at affected homes.

Dump excavation and remediation are pending. Contaminated material will be hauled to a licensed out-of-state landfill, McNitt said.

The affected area is south of Boxelder Creek. The Forest Service has tested the wells for the Nemo Post Office and Nemo Fire Hall east of the center, and will test wells for adjacent landowners as a precaution, he said.

"We certainly are taking this seriously and dealing with it as quickly as possible. ... Forest Supervisor (John) Twiss is very concerned about the residents and our employees."

Forest officials will discuss the issue at a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 23, at the Nemo Fire Hall.