

Search for contaminants at Nemo delayed

The search for contaminants reportedly buried over 20 years ago at the Black Hills National Forest Work Center in Nemo has been delayed by early winter weather. Forest Service coordinator Bill Schleining announced that EnviroSearch International, the contractor conducting the removal action, has temporarily stopped a portion of its search operations.

"EnviroSearch has completed the initial search of those sites identified as burial pits," stated Schleining. "They dug many pits and trenches throughout the area, without finding any trace of buried cans or barrels. The lack of any evidence of contaminants may require additional methods to locate the source of contamination of wells in the area."

Ethylene Dibromide, a toxic substance used in the 1970s to control mountain pine beetles, was reportedly disposed of at the Nemo

Work Center. Tests recently showed traces of this chemical in the water wells of several Nemo residents.

The search efforts were complicated by temperatures below 40 degrees which would not allow monitoring equipment to detect EDB vapors. This also created a safety hazard for crews digging in the area.

"This caused us to re-assess our plan of attack and take another look at how we want to proceed," said Schleining. "We are not stopping the search and cleanup. We are just changing our schedule. Work will continue until we resolve the problems out there."

Over the last week, the Forest Service laid new water lines to all affected residences and will provide fresh water until a permanent solution can be found. Forest Service crews, along with several local contractors, worked throughout the

weekend storm to accomplish this.

EnviroSearch International will continue to do additional testing and surveys to help determine the extent of the groundwater contamination. They may be drilling test and monitor wells, doing geologic and hydrologic surveys, and continuing to take water samples.

The Forest Service and EnviroSearch International will also continue to evaluate possible permanent solutions to the contaminated wells. This could include drilling a community well, new individual wells, filtering systems or other alternatives.

"We are impressed by the patience and understanding of the good people of Nemo," concluded Schleining. "They have put up with a lot the past few days and have worked with us to make the best of an unfortunate situation. We are doing our best to resolve this as quickly as possible."