

Castle Environmental Cleanup **FAQ**

Frequently Asked Questions



Q: Is the water supply on the former Castle Air Force Base property safe to drink and where does it come from?

A: Yes, the drinking water supply is safe to drink. Groundwater contamination was initially discovered at Castle AFB in 1979, long before the base closed in 1995. In response, the Air Force conducted investigations, constructed new base water supply wells, and connected residents on the base boundary to the new water supply system. Throughout the investigation and cleanup period, a safe drinking water supply has always been and continues to be provided at Castle. The Air Force has ensured safe drinking water on the former base and for surrounding off-base residents by continued monitoring and by providing treatment or replacement of water supply wells, where appropriate.

Q: How can you be sure the water is safe to drink?

A: The contaminated water is not used for drinking water. Further, it is prohibited to install wells in the contaminated areas. Wells providing drinking water are tested regularly, and annual water quality reports are provided to water customers as required by law. In addition, the Air Force samples the water from many drinking water wells including base supply wells, private drinking water wells and municipal drinking water wells. The Air Force takes samples from the extraction and monitoring wells used to monitor cleanup at regular intervals. This process is overseen by regional, state and federal regulators.

Q: What about the soil? Is it hazardous?

A: Since the cleanup began in the 1980s, the Air Force has gathered extensive information about locations where hazardous waste was dumped, leaked or spilled. Many sites were cleaned up by excavation and off-site disposal at regulated facilities. The Air Force used Soil Vapor Extraction (SVE) at 22 sites, mostly to remove solvents and jet fuel. All but one SVE system have been turned off and the regulatory agencies have agreed that no further action is required. The remaining system continues to operate at the former base fuel storage and distribution facility to address fuel contamination. Completion of cleanup actions at the fuel facility is planned for 2014. Seven landfills were used for waste disposal at the former base. The Air Force consolidated these into two landfills, which are capped to prevent rainwater percolating through them into the groundwater. The landfills are vented to prevent methane buildup. Monitoring wells in the vicinity ensure methane or contaminants from the landfills do not migrate to adjacent property or leach into groundwater. In accordance with state and federal regulations, the landfills will be maintained and monitored for at least 30 years. Site usage controls for the landfill sites will remain indefinitely.

Q: When I drive around Castle, I see signs for cleanup systems and I see piping and equipment. What is coming out of these and is it dangerous to breathe?

A: The soil vapor extraction (SVE) system at the former fuel storage and distribution facility discharges treated air extracted from subsurface soil. The treated air is monitored and tested to ensure that it complies with regulatory and permit requirements. The low concentrations emitted in the treated air do not pose a significant health threat and are also released from exhaust stacks that carry the treated air away from ground level. The cleanup efforts at the former Castle AFB do not make the air at Castle dangerous or unhealthy in any way.



Q: The cleanup at Castle seems to be going on for a very long time. Why?

A: Even using the best available cleanup technologies, the removal of contaminants in the soil and groundwater is a time-consuming process. The cleanup process is carefully managed to methodically achieve cleanup while avoiding unneeded expense to taxpayers. Numerous regulatory agencies closely oversee this cleanup process to ensure protection of human health and the environment. Additionally, there's an EPA requirement for review every five years to make sure the remedies remain protective.

Q: When did the Air Force start the cleanup and when will they be finished?

A: The Air Force began cleaning up Castle in the 1980s. As of 2007, all cleanup systems were in place working to remove contamination and many have been removed after achieving cleanup goals. The Air Force will continue with the remaining cleanup until the job is done. The last ongoing soil cleanup action, which is at the former fuel storage and distribution facility, is expected to be cleaned up by 2014, but groundwater cleanup may continue in some areas for 10-20 years. Landfill protection and monitoring will continue at least for the 30-year maintenance and monitoring period required by regulations and site usage controls for the landfill sites will remain indefinitely.

Q: Is my workplace affected by the ongoing cleanup operation?

A: There is no exposure or increased health risk from cleanup operations at any workplace on the former Castle AFB. Some businesses are located close to cleanup equipment such as wells or piping, and must take care not to damage or disturb these.

Q: Where can I get more information about the cleanup?

A: You can look on our website: www.afcec.hq.af.mil Then, in right-hand column, select "BRAC Bases" pull down menu. Choose "Castle AFB, California." To get on our mailing list, email afropa.west.pa@us.af.mil or phone **(916) 643-6420 x257**. Contact the AFRPA Public Affairs Office by calling **(916) 643-6420 x109**.