



# CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY NEWS RELEASE

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## Department of Toxic Substances Control

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### **DTSC Requires Pacific Gas and Electric's Topock Facility to Initiate Contingency Plan**

Los Angeles --- The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today announced it has required Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) to enact its contingency plan after preliminary results from a sample taken from a new groundwater monitoring well located approximately 60 feet from the Colorado River detected hexavalent chromium. The sample detected hexavalent chromium at 354 parts per billion (ppb) which exceeded the State of California drinking water standard of 50 ppb for total chromium. The new well was installed as part of DTSC's ongoing investigations at PG&E's Topock facility located near Needles, San Bernardino County.

DTSC's actions were based on preliminary laboratory results taken on February 14, 2005 from a newly installed ground water monitoring well (MW-34-100) located approximately 60 feet away from the Colorado River. The preliminary sample was collected approximately 70 feet below the bottom elevation of the Colorado River. Samples collected from two shallower wells at the same location were non-detect for hexavalent chromium. In addition, river water samples collected at the same time did not detect any hexavalent chromium.

"At this point, we are following our contingency plan; we do not have any indication that the contaminant has reached the river. We have required PG&E to enact the contingency plan as a preventive measure," said B.B. Blevins, DTSC Director.

Upon notification of laboratory results, DTSC immediately required PG&E to implement the DTSC approved contingency plan as outlined under Interim Measure #2 which occurred in March 2004. The plan includes:

- Conduct weekly sampling of selected floodplain wells
- Increase pumping from Extraction Well TW-2D up to the maximum available capacity of the treatment system (currently extracting and treating 70 gallons per minute)
- Install another extraction well near MW-34-100
- Determine if current extraction is maintaining groundwater flow away from the Colorado River in the area

In addition, PG&E will continue to install additional groundwater monitoring wells to further define the extent of ground water contamination near the river.

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PG&E has owned and operated the Topock Compressor Station, located about 15 miles southeast of Needles, since 1951. PG&E uses the Topock facility to compress natural gas for transportation through pipelines to its service territory in Central and Northern California. Hexavalent chromium was used as an additive in cooling tower water as a corrosion inhibitor between 1951 and 1985.

At the direction of DTSC, PG&E began extracting ground water as part of an Interim Measure in March 2004. PG&E is currently constructing a new water treatment system under Interim Measure #3 to increase groundwater treatment capacity. The expanded treatment system is anticipated to be operational mid 2005.

DTSC, as the lead agency for the site investigation and cleanup, is collaborating with a consultative workgroup including the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Colorado River Region, United States Environmental Protection Agency - Region 9, United States Department of the Interior, United States Bureau of Land Management, United States Bureau of Reclamation, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. In addition, DTSC is coordinating with the local Native American tribal representatives.

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***The Department of Toxic Substances Control's mission is to restore, protect, and enhance the environment and ensure public health, environmental quality and economic vitality by regulating hazardous waste, conducting and overseeing cleanups, and developing and promoting pollution prevention.***