



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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State requires utility to provide residents with alternative drinking water, conduct assessment

RALEIGH – State officials directed Duke Energy Progress, Inc. on Wednesday to supply residents of an Asheville-area home with alternative drinking water after tests revealed that the home’s private well contains unsafe levels of contamination.

The residence is between the French Broad River and Duke Energy Progress’ coal ash storage facility for its Asheville Plant in southern Buncombe County.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources is requiring that the utility provide alternative drinking water to residents at the residence in Arden, south of Asheville, by Nov. 15. Other residential wells tested in the area remain safe, according to state and federal drinking and groundwater standards.

The state agency also directed the utility to install offsite monitoring wells to determine the type and extent of chemical contamination in the area, according to a letter DENR sent to the utility and the affected residents Wednesday. The state agency directed Duke Energy to provide DENR with the assessment plan by Dec. 8.

“Getting clean drinking water to this residence is our highest priority at this point,” said John Skvarla, secretary of the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “We are confident that Duke Energy Progress shares the state’s commitment to protect public health and North Carolina’s environment.”

The private water supply wells that have shown contamination are near the utility’s coal-fired power plant that is the subject of litigation between DENR and the utility. Officials are awaiting a judge’s decision on the proposed consent order DENR filed this summer seeking to address compliance issues with the wastewater discharge permit at the plant.

The requirements outlined in the letter DENR sent to the utility Wednesday are consistent with the approach the state agency has already proposed in the draft consent order to address issues at the Asheville Plant and the Riverbend Plant in Gaston County. DENR has also filed suit against Duke Energy to address issues at the utility’s 12 remaining coal ash storage facilities in North Carolina and will take all appropriate action at these sites.

The Division of Water Resources, part of DENR, recently sampled five water supply wells near the Asheville plant. Results received from three of the wells do not reveal concentrations of any targeted constituents above federal drinking water standards or groundwater standards. However, the results of samples taken in December 2012 and again last month from the well at one home indicated the presence of iron and manganese in concentrations considered by federal standards unsafe to drink without filtration. Staff from the Division of Water Resources immediately informed the affected residents of the test results. Also, samples taken last month at the neighboring residence indicated the presence of thallium that is considered safe to drink by federal standards but is still atypical in groundwater in the Asheville area. Samples taken at the compliance boundary wells on Duke Energy’s property also indicated the presence of iron, manganese and thallium.

The assessment will require the utility to install monitoring wells offsite of Duke Energy’s property and conduct contaminant testing in those wells, including testing for iron, manganese, boron, arsenic and thallium. DENR staff will continue to monitor the five water supply wells near the Asheville plant as warranted.

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