



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Most results from drinking well tests show exceedences of state groundwater standards near coal ash ponds

RALEIGH – The first results of well testing sent to residents and others near Duke Energy’s coal ash ponds show that most of the water supplies contain contaminants that exceed state groundwater standards.

State officials said that while some state groundwater standards were exceeded, in nearly all of these cases the well water would still meet all the criteria of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act for municipal water supplies.

Of the 117 results mailed, 87 exceeded state groundwater standards. Information mailed from the state to the residents includes the test results, health risk evaluations and, as necessary, potential well treatment options to remove or reduce contaminants from well water.

The results from the first batch of tests include results for well owners near Duke Energy’s Allen, Asheville, Belews Creek, Buck, Cliffside, Marshall, Roxboro and Sutton facilities.

“We understand the importance of these findings for residents who recently received letters alerting them to the presence of metals in their water supplies that exceed state groundwater standards,” said Tom Reeder, assistant secretary for the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources. “We are providing those individuals with information to improve their drinking water quality. Also, DENR will investigate the source of any constituents that exceed groundwater standards. If we determine that groundwater standards in a well have been exceeded and that a coal ash pond is the source of that exceedence, we will require Duke Energy to provide the residents with an alternative water supply.”

Many constituents that were tested in the public and private drinking water wells may be naturally occurring or unrelated to coal ash ponds. As part of its probe, DENR scientists will seek to determine the source of the metals present in groundwater at these locations and whether they are naturally occurring.

DENR required Duke Energy to contract with private laboratories to collect samples at water supply wells within 1,000 feet of each facility’s boundary, as a requirement of the Coal Ash Management Act of 2014.

The sample results are being compared to the state standards that are calculated to protect the groundwater, which well owners commonly use as a source for drinking, bathing or cooking.

While DENR evaluated the results for regulatory purposes, the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services used the same data to evaluate health risks. All results have been sent to DHHS for a health risk evaluation. State officials began last week sending residents living near Duke Energy’s coal ash facilities the health risk evaluations from DHHS and the water test results.

Results will be made available after state officials confirm that residents have received their individual results.

Based on the laboratory results, DENR determined that the most common constituents that exceeded state regulatory standards are iron, manganese and pH – all of which can be found naturally in North Carolina soils and groundwater as well as in coal ash. State officials will continue to collect and analyze the results of water samples from wells near other Duke Energy coal ash facilities and will make those results available to affected residents and the public.

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