

# PERC Pollution at Peach Orchard Road

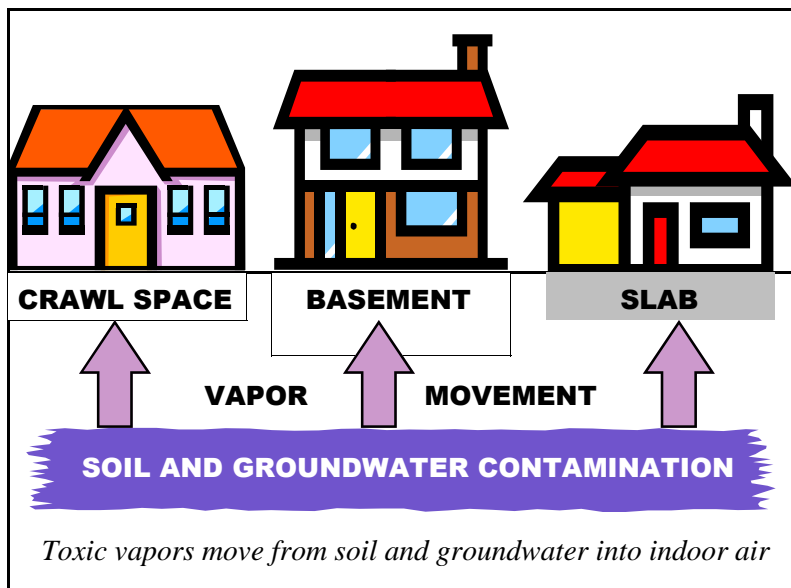
## *Toxic soil, water and air are a health hazard*

Ten years ago the Georgia Environmental Protection Division investigated the area near Peach Orchard, Lumpkin and Old Savannah roads and found widespread contamination. The pollutants they uncovered include PCE, TCE and vinyl chloride. These are toxic chemicals. For example, PCE, also known as perchloroethylene or PERC, can cause liver damage, kidney damage and cancer.

The source of this pollution is dry-cleaning establishments. Even when dry-cleaning operators abide by current laws, contamination of the air, soil and groundwater with PERC can still occur. And some local dry-cleaners continue to use toxic PERC solvent to clean clothes.

The US Environmental Protection Agency put the Peach Orchard Road site on its National Priorities List (NPL), also known as the Superfund. In 2007 the EPA proposed a cleanup plan which would inject hydrogen peroxide into the contaminated area. This type of cleanup may remove some of the pollution, but not all; toxic by-products can be left behind. And EPA has not addressed the problem of vapor intrusion into homes and other structures.

The Augusta Utilities Department closed one city well because of the pollution, but five other contaminated wells remain open. **Residents in the area should not use their own well water.**



Today, an area of 350 acres is still contaminated with PERC solvents. These poisons may enter homes and other buildings by vapor intrusion.

**Vapor intrusion** occurs when volatile chemicals in soil or groundwater enter through gaps in the foundation, basement, or crawl space. EPA and GEPD should test the air in homes and take steps to eliminate the hazard.

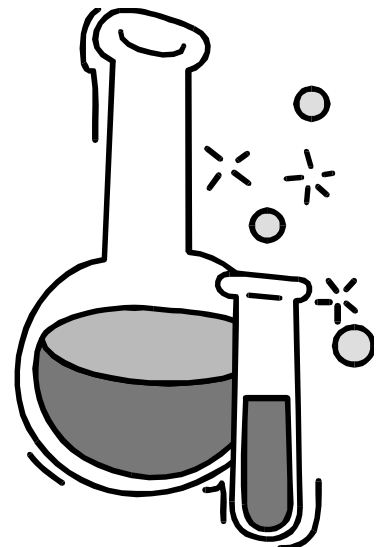
April 2009

## Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

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# Dry Cleaning Solvent (PERC) Hazardous to Your Health

- **Dry cleaning really isn't DRY!** Dry cleaning uses a chemical solvent called perchloroethylene - or PERC for short - to clean clothes. PERC is a clear, colorless liquid that removes dirt and evaporates quickly.
- **Is PERC dangerous to my health?** PERC is highly toxic, and can cause dizziness, fatigue, headaches, confusion, nausea, and skin, lung, eye and mucous membrane irritation in people. Exposure to high levels of PERC can cause liver damage and respiratory failure. Experiments on laboratory animals exposed to high levels of PERC have resulted in altered growth, birth defects, and death of animal babies. The elderly, young children, or pregnant women are most susceptible to the effects of PERC. Small amounts of PERC in water have been shown to be toxic.
- **Can PERC cause cancer?** PERC has been shown to cause cancer in mice and rats when they swallow or inhale it. Studies of workers in the laundry and dry-cleaning industry suggest that there's a link between PERC exposure and elevated risks of certain types of cancer. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), concluded that PERC is "probably carcinogenic to humans."
- **How are people exposed to PERC?** If you live or work next to a dry-cleaning facility or a former dry-cleaning facility, you may be exposed to PERC through the air you breathe or the water you drink. Also, clothing which is dry-cleaned is contaminated with PERC.
- **Can my drinking water become contaminated with PERC?** Yes. PERC can seep through the ground and contaminate surface water, groundwater, and drinking water wells. There are 767 EPA Superfund sites with PERC contamination.
- **Are there other ways to be exposed to PERC?** PERC vapors can pass through floors, ceilings, and wall materials of a dry-cleaning shop and into adjacent building spaces. PERC can also travel outside and enter nearby commercial buildings, apartments or people's homes through the ground surface, holes, vents, and other means.
- **Are there alternatives to using PERC?** The best way to clean clothes with "dry clean only" labels is to take them to businesses that don't use PERC. For example, "wet cleaning" uses water and special detergents that won't harm your cloths. Another method uses non-toxic carbon dioxide to clean your "dry-clean only" suits and dresses. You can purchase clothes that don't require dry cleaning.



For more information, contact:

March 2009

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