



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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Contact: Susan Massengale; Sarah Young
Phone: 919-707-9014; 919-707-9033

Letters from state invite residents near Duke Energy coal ash impoundments to have water tested

Action is part of setting priorities for coal ash pond closure

RALEIGH – The N.C. Division of Water Resources is inviting residents with water supply wells near Duke Energy’s coal-fired electricity generating facilities to participate in a program to have their wells tested.

Testing water supply wells is part of the state agency’s efforts to protect public health and the environment and determine the extent of groundwater contamination at the state’s 32 coal ash ponds. This information will be used to produce a risk-based schedule that prioritizes the closure of all 32 ash ponds, as called for in the Coal Ash Management Act of 2014.

Letters from the division are being mailed this week to 289 residents with private water supply wells and 15 public drinking water systems within 1,000 feet of a Duke Energy coal ash impoundment. Each well owner is asked to choose a contract laboratory to do the testing from an approved list of laboratories provided by the state Division of Water Resources.

Groundwater samples from supply wells will be collected and tested for constituents associated with coal ash: aluminum, antimony, arsenic, barium, beryllium, boron, cadmium, cobalt, chromium, copper, iron, lead, magnesium, manganese, molybdenum, mercury, nickel, potassium, selenium, sodium, strontium, thallium, vanadium, zinc, chloride, sulfate, alkalinity, bicarbonate, carbonate, total dissolved solids, and total suspended solids. The state agency anticipates the detection of many of these metals because they are naturally occurring and commonly found in North Carolina’s groundwater.

Analytical results will be evaluated by the division’s technical staff to determine if the constituents detected are naturally occurring, derived from coal burning activities or if additional testing is necessary. If analytical results indicate an exceedance of groundwater standards for any of the constituents on the list, the analytical results will be sent to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Service’s Division of Public Health so a health risk evaluation can be completed. A health risk evaluation determines if the water poses any health risk to users and provides guidance on how the water can be used safely. The test results and the health risk evaluation, if needed, will be sent to the well owner with a letter from the Division of Water Resources explaining what the results indicate.

The assessment is being done in accordance with the Coal Ash Management Act of 2014. As stated in the law, if the sampling and water quality analysis indicates that there is an exceedance of groundwater quality standards attributable to constituents associated with the presence of the impoundment, Duke Energy is required to provide an alternate supply of water that is safe for drinking and other household uses.

To see samples of the letters the state sent this week to the residents and public drinking water systems, see the link on the N.C. Division of Water Resources’ website: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/wq/water-test-resident-info>.

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Jamie Kritzer, Public Information Officer
Phone: (919) 707-8602
<http://www.facebook.com/ncdenr>
1601 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-1601
[RSS](#)

Jamie.Kritzer@ncdenr.gov
Facebook:

RSS feed: <http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/opa/news-releases-rss>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/NCDENR>