



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

BOBBY JINDAL
GOVERNOR

PEGGY M. HATCH
SECRETARY

For Immediate Release
Sept. 21, 2012

Contact: Rodney Mallett
Phone: 225-219-3964

DEQ, Assumption Parish Sheriff's Department continue to conduct indoor air monitoring within Bayou Corne community

BATON ROUGE – On Sept. 18, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and the Assumption Parish Sheriff's Department began conducting indoor air monitoring within the Bayou Corne community as a result of the ongoing sinkhole investigation in Assumption Parish and because of concerns from local citizens. To date, eight homes have been monitored with no concerns noted. Additional homes will be monitored as the rights of passage are received and citizens are contacted to set up a date and approximate time for the assessment.

The air monitoring at Bayou Corne involves the use of real-time air monitoring equipment. After residents have completed a right-of-entry form, a DEQ air monitoring expert and a parish sheriff's deputy will come to the resident's home and with the resident present, the air monitoring team will begin sampling efforts. Indoor air sampling teams are monitoring for Lower Explosive Limit (LEL), Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), and hydrogen sulfide (H₂S). The LEL is lowest concentration of a gas or vapor that is capable of producing a flash of fire in the presence of an ignition source such as flame or heat.

VOCs are naturally occurring and emitted by a variety of products. VOCs include a variety of chemicals, some of which may have short or long-term adverse health effects. Concentrations of many VOCs are up to 10 times higher indoors than outdoors because of materials used in home construction and furnishing. Some VOCs are flammable, while some are not.

H₂S occurs naturally in crude petroleum, natural gas, volcanic gases and hot springs. It can also result from bacterial breakdown of organic matter, and it is produced by human and animal wastes. Bacteria found in your mouth and gastrointestinal tract produce hydrogen sulfide. Hydrogen sulfide can also result from industrial activities, such as food processing, coke ovens, kraft paper mills, tanneries, and petroleum refineries. Hydrogen sulfide is a flammable, colorless gas with a characteristic odor of rotten eggs. It is commonly known as hydrosulfuric acid, sewer gas, and stink damp. People can smell it at levels far lower than those that can cause adverse health effects.

Natural gas is primarily composed of methane, which is a flammable VOC. Therefore, the devices used for indoor air monitoring are measuring methane indirectly through the LEL and VOC criteria. To date, all indoor measurements have been within normal ranges, indicating no accumulation of methane within the indoor areas that have been monitored.

Earlier in the investigation, DEQ sampled people's property outside of the home to ensure public safety. More than 90 homes were sampled, and there were no areas of concern noted.

Other environmental activities include:

- Daily Air monitoring in the Bayou Corne community.–Parameters monitored are H₂S, VOCs, and LEL.
- Daily Air monitoring in the areas of the bubbling (boat run) in Bayou Corne. Parameters monitored include H₂S, VOCs, LEL, and O₂.
- Continuous monitoring of the ambient air via The LDEQ Mobil Air Monitoring Lab (MAML is analyzing for the presence of methane, non-methane hydrocarbons, hydrogen sulfide and volatiles.
- Daily 24/7 air monitoring at the Texas Brine site with the assistance of EPA contractors. Parameters monitored include CO, H₂S, VOCs, LEL, and O₂.
- To date, there have been no areas of concern related to the air monitoring activities have been noted.

For more information, please click on the Bayou Corne tab on the DEQ Web site at www.deq.louisiana.gov, or go directly to www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/bayoucorne.aspx for daily informational updates.

-30-

DEQ COMMUNICATIONS
WWW.DEQ.LOUISIANA.GOV