



Chemical spill was no threat to Napa's drinking water

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A corroded valve on a 12,000 gallon chemical tank at the water treatment plant, near the spillway at Conn Dam, led to some tense moments Monday afternoon.

The faulty valve caused 10,000 gallons of ferric chloride liquid to leak from the tank.

Although the spill is near Lake Hennessey off Sage Canyon Road, which holds the county's drinking water, it never posed a threat of contaminating the water, according to Napa County Fire Marshal Kate Dargan.

Workers at the water treatment facility discovered the leak and notified fire officials.

Ferric chloride, which is highly caustic and can eat through metal and skin, is used to treat the county's drinking water. The leaking chemical was contained inside two berms that are built for incidents such as this, Dargan said.

The spill happened around 3:30 p.m., closing Sage Canyon Road for about two hours. No one was evacuated, Dargan said. Ferric chloride is not a heavy gas that spreads through the air, she added.

The water treatment system where the spill happened is shut down for the winter.

"The situation is pretty static right now," Dargan said. "The spill is contained, and we have a private vendor at site that will dispose of the chemical."

An unnamed company, which specializes in Hazmat spills, will use hoses to suck up the ferric chloride and put it in an alternate tank, she said.

"If everything goes as planned, we should have the spill cleaned up by tonight and things will be back to normal," Dargan said late Monday afternoon.

About 40 people from the Napa County Interagency Hazmat team were called to the scene.

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