

"We can't do an investigation if they won't give us information," he said. Residents said the man who sold them the land in the subdivision, Ray Herro, told them the water smelled bad.

Herro said he told buyers they would have to haul drinking water to their homes because well water in the area was undrinkable.

Many residents said they first started having health problems after an injection well near one of the houses in the subdivision made a water well back up and spray water five feet into the air March 25.

Texas Railroad Commission in-

spectors found that the injection well was operating with too much pressure and closed it temporarily.

After the water well backed up, residents began noticing sores on their skin, rashes, and itching after they took showers with the water from their wells. At least one woman and two girls had hair loss in different areas on their heads.

Elvira Rodriguez, a Tradewinds resident, said she had known the water was salty before her family moved into the subdivision, but she didn't know just how salty it was.

Two members of her family were affected, Mrs. Rodriguez believes, by the

well water. One of her daughters lost hair in several patches. Her son has abdominal pains. She also thinks her animals may have been affected by the water. One of her roosters died. Her dog is losing its hair.

After the March 25 incident, residents started complaining about the water.

State Sen. Carlos Truan, D-Corpus Christi, has offered to try to pass a bill establishing a water district for the subdivision. That legislation, he said, may be possible in the special session of the Legislature that begins tomorrow. The session, however, is called only to act on education and highway problems. Such a

bill for Tradewinds would have to be put on the agenda by the governor.

Also a part of the Tradewinds water controversy is the San Patricio County Health Department plan to crack down on homeowners in the subdivision who do not have proper septic tank permits and septic tanks.

Hansen said two residents had told him they wanted to wait until the water matter was resolved before buying a septic tank.

Even if the residents are waiting for resolution of the water problem, Hansen said, they still are breaking the law and the county will have to cite residents who

do not comply.

"The sewage on the ground is more of a problem than the water at this point," Hansen said.

Carol Adams, another resident, said her family and pets are having water-related health problems.

Mrs. Adams said the water's appearance changes quickly, even in a few hours time. But it always smells bad.

"You never know what's going to come out next," she said.

"It just seems funny that this whole thing came in all of a sudden, affecting a number of people in the area," Mrs. Adams said. "Something's just not right."

Tradewinds residents blame well water for health woes

By TELA GOODWIN Staff Writer

Three girls — 6, 12 and 14 years old — and a woman are losing their hair. At least two women and a man have suffered or are suffering from inexplicable blisters and rashes.

They're all residents of the Tradewinds Estates subdivision in San Patricio County near Gregory and they don't know why they're sick. They think it might be the well water. But no one is sure.

Two things are sure: Residents of Tradewinds are afraid. And tests by the State Department of Health say their well water is not safe to drink because its salt and chloride con-

cent are higher than the state allows.

Most Tradewinds have stopped using the water for drinking, cooking and bath. For those who have, their skin has started to heal.

Most, like Sofia Torres and her family, now haul water to cook, bathe, clean, and water the plants. They only use the well water to flush the commode.

The Torres family has been hauling water since moving into the subdivision April 25, 1983.

"Water is essential in a home," she said. "We have to go to Gregory to get water, and that's just too far. When you run out of water, what do you do? You get so tempted to use the water, but everyone around here is too scared to

'We have to go to Gregory to get water, and that's just too far. When you run out of water, what do you do? You get so tempted to use the (well) water, but everyone around here is too scared to use it.'

— Sofia Torres

Some of the well water tested by the state health department and a private laboratory service shows high amounts of chlorides, lead and chemical salts, and traces of arsenic, barium and zinc. State drinking water primary regu-

lations allow no more than 0.05 milligram of arsenic per liter of water. State tests found between less than 0.01 milligram of arsenic per liter of water and 0.015 milligram per liter of water per liter in the four Tradewinds samples sent in.

One water sample of two tested showed 0.06 milligram of lead per liter, while the state allows only 0.05 milligram of lead per liter. The other sample showed 0.02 milligram of lead per liter.

Dr. Christopher M.G. Buttery, director of the City of Corpus Christi/Nueces County Health Department in Corpus Christi, said the state always sets acceptable water quality standards "conservatively. We want to make the stand-

ard far below what the maximum safe exposure is." Wilford Hansen, chief of sanitation for San Patricio County, Natty said there were no water-related health problems at the subdivision.

"All that stuff they're (the residents) putting out about being sick because of the water is a bunch of baloney," Hansen said.

"If they were sick, why didn't they report it to us?" he asked. Hansen said several residents told him they were afraid the county would fine them for not having a septic tank if they reported that the water was making them sick.

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