

Thornton Shopping Center

Fact Sheet: December 2024

- In 2005, chemicals were discovered in groundwater beneath the Thornton Shopping Center. The chemicals are from historical dry-cleaning operations.
- Groundwater wells have been installed in the area and are actively sampled to better understand impacts.
- **Drinking water is not affected.**
- Indoor air was sampled in 2012 and 2019. Levels were low and not an immediate risk at that time.
- In April 2024, the Thornton Development Authority took over the property and the site cleanup.
- To evaluate current conditions, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) is requiring the Thornton Development Authority to conduct additional, updated indoor air testing.
- If conditions warrant, free indoor air mitigation systems, like those used for radon, may be installed with the homeowner's permission.

Background

The Thornton Shopping Center (TSC) is located on the northwest corner of 88th and Corona Street in Thornton, Colorado. The TSC is currently being monitored because chemicals were released from a former dry-cleaning operation in the shopping center. The main chemical, perchloroethylene (PCE), is discussed in detail on the next page.

Cleanup efforts at the TSC have begun and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has overseen its progress for years. The Thornton Development Authority – an Urban Renewal Authority established by the City of Thornton – obtained ownership of the property in April 2024 and is responsible for site cleanup, including costs, with ongoing reports submitted to CDPHE.

Environmental monitoring and remediation efforts will continue until environmental regulatory requirements are met to the satisfaction of the CDPHE.



A former dry cleaner in the Thornton Shopping Center released chemicals, namely PCE, that need to be monitored. The red circles show the locations of groundwater monitoring wells installed in the community to monitor the groundwater. Drinking water is not affected.

What is Perchloroethylene (PCE)?

- Perchloroethylene is a liquid chemical that is colorless, non-flammable, and evaporates easily.
- It is also known as “tetrachloroethylene,” “PCE,” or “perc.”
- PCE is used for dry cleaning and as a metal degreaser. It is also found in certain household products.
- Many dry cleaners are not using alternatives to PCE. The chemicals found in dry cleaners are usually not an immediate threat to human health.
- PCE released from dry cleaners is often found in soil and groundwater. Affected soils are usually in a small area surrounding the original release.
- PCE can stay in the environment for decades in groundwater and will travel in the direction of groundwater flow.
- Groundwater with PCE can “vent” PCE vapors into the soils above. These vapors can then travel into the buildings on top of the soil. If needed, installing air cleaning systems will let the vapors out, removing potential health risks.
- The impact of PCE exposure on human health varies depending on how long, how often, and how much people are exposed.
- Bacteria in soil and groundwater can break down PCE over time.
- Environmental remediation, or cleanup, can also break down or remove PCE. Remediation efforts have started at the Thornton Shopping Center and will continue until cleanup goals are met.

Indoor Air Sampling and Next Steps

- The CDPHE is requiring the Thornton Shopping Center owner, the Thornton Development Authority, to test indoor air in buildings immediately southeast of the property.
- Residents and businesses will be provided with a copy of the test results and multiple sampling events may be required to confirm results.
- Property owners may be offered free mitigation systems, like those used for radon, should conditions warrant.

For More Information

For more information on the health and environmental effects of PCE, please view the CDPHE *Dry Cleaners and PCE Fact Sheet* at <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/hm/enviro-cleanup-guidance-policy>.

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