

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late 1998, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board) was asked to investigate a trend of elevated **hexavalent chromium (chromium VI) concentrations in drinking water wells** in the San Fernando Valley. This request came from the Upper Los Angeles River Areas Watermaster (Appendix A). In response, the Regional Board entered into a cooperative agreement with the **United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)** to identify and inspect suspected sources of chromium VI. After review of 4,040 potential responsible parties investigated under the Federal Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation Liability Act (CERCLA) for their use of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), 255 suspected chromium VI sites were identified. This report reflects the findings of Well Investigation Program staff of the Regional Board who performed the follow-up inspections.

The San Fernando Valley groundwater basin is a natural groundwater reservoir that represents an important source of drinking water for the Los Angeles metropolitan area. Groundwater flows from the northwest to the southeast across the basin. Chromium VI has been detected in elevated concentrations in drinking water and groundwater monitoring wells throughout the study area. It is believed that most of the chromium VI is not naturally occurring, but originates from industrial pollution sources.

Regional Board staff of the Well Investigation Program inspected all of the 255 suspected chromium VI within six Superfund Operable Units and in surrounding areas and found 105 sites requiring further assessment and 150 that will be recommended for no further action (NFA). As expected, a majority of those sites requiring further assessment are heavy metal plating shops, followed only by aerospace companies engaged in U.S. Department of Defense contract work, such as aircraft assembly and/or aircraft part manufacturing. To a lesser extent, there are companies that use chromium compounds to produce jewelry, paints, dyes, chemicals and/or yield chromium waste streams. Based on available assessment data on file, Regional Board staff did not find a direct relationship between chromium impacted soil data and present chromium VI groundwater concentrations.

The 255 suspected sites do not reflect the whole picture. Within the study area, there remains to be screened about 300 sites that are under the jurisdiction of other regulatory agencies. Recently passed California legislation, **SB 351**, requires that the California Department of Health Services to adopt a maximum contaminant level (MCL) drinking water standard for chromium VI on or before January 1, 2004. Depending on available resources and funding, Regional Board staff may follow-up from this study with a Phase II project that will continue to identify more chromium soil and groundwater polluters in the San Fernando Valley. We intend to complete assessments, direct soil and groundwater cleanup and to take enforcement action when appropriate, though resources challenges to accomplish this objective remain evident.