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Duke University study finds hexavalent chromium is not from ash basins

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Duke Energy today issued the following statement regarding new [research from Duke University](#) that identified low levels of hexavalent chromium in many drinking water wells far from coal ash basins. The study is published in the Oct. 26 peer-reviewed journal [Environmental Science and Technology Letters](#).

We are gratified that Duke University's independent research supports and validates the robust scientific study that experts have conducted at our facilities.

"When combined with previous research, there is overwhelming evidence that coal ash basins are not impacting water quality in neighbor wells," said Harry Sideris, senior vice president of environmental, health and safety. "This study is an extraordinary development, particularly for hundreds of plant neighbors who have been needlessly concerned that ash basins contributed hexavalent chromium or other substances to their wells."

We remain focused on offering permanent water solutions to plant neighbors, as required by North Carolina's new coal ash law.

Given the clear evidence from a number of sources, it's time to move forward with safely closing ash basins in ways that protect people, the environment and wallets.

While coal ash basins have been ruled out as the source of hexavalent chromium in wells, the Duke University study raises important questions about drinking water. We support calls for EPA to complete its scientific review of an appropriate standard for hexavalent chromium in drinking water so there can be consistent guidance across the nation.

Additional data points:

- The N.C. Department of Environmental Quality conducted background testing in August 2015 that identified hexavalent chromium in a number of private wells that were not near ash basins. Subsequent testing in other areas, such as Chatham, Jackson and Lee counties, also showed similar results.

- Dr. Kenneth Rudo noted in recent testimony that the state health agency issued 50 to 70 health risk evaluations for hexavalent chromium in North Carolina wells not near ash basins.
- A 2004 Water Research Foundation-funded study investigated drinking water sources across the nation. In groundwater sources, a significant percentage of the chromium present was hexavalent chromium (Frey 2004).
- Comprehensive groundwater studies of Duke Energy ash basins found the concentrations of hexavalent chromium in ash basin water are low and are not consistent with the higher levels observed in neighbors' wells. Similarly, ash basins are relatively shallow, and the concentrations of hexavalent chromium are typically higher the deeper you sample into bedrock. This suggests the source is natural geology.

For additional information, visit duke-energy.com/ash-management.

About Duke Energy

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