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## Home shows TCE after mitigation Owner says she'll move; DEC optimistic

By JENNIE DALEY  
Journal Staff

ITHACA — Janet Snoyer is moving. After multiple tests for pollutants in her South Hill home, installation of a mitigation system and the persistent presence of toxic chemicals, she has had enough.

The reappearance of trichloroethene, or TCE, in the first tests taken since she agreed to a mitigation system was the last straw, Snoyer said.

"It's motivating us to move so we just don't have to deal with this situation," agreed her 24-year-old daughter, Manisha Snoyer.

TCE is a potentially carcinogenic chemical that was used by the former Morse Chain plant, now owned by Emerson Power Transmission. Used to degrease chain made at the plant, TCE and a host of other potentially toxic chemicals are showing up in gaseous form in basements downhill from the site.

In Snoyer's basement, initial tests last fall showed TCE levels of 5.8 micrograms per cubic meter, high enough for Emerson, which is now



KATE SCHLEE/Journal Staff

**Janet Snoyer, left, reviews information concerning past indoor air samples taken in her home with Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Engineer Tom Suozzo Wednesday afternoon in the living room of Snoyer's home in Ithaca.**

### WHY IT MATTERS:

**WHAT:** TCE was found in Janet Snoyer's South Hill home after Emerson Power Transmission installed a mitigation system intended to eliminate the presence of the pollutant.

**WHY:** This is the first and only mitigation installed so far in Ithaca. Understanding its function and failures will be useful to other residents considering a similar route.

**MORE INFORMATION:** An on-line archive of The Ithaca Journal's stories on the Morse-Chain related pollutants can be found at [www.theithacajournal.com/toxic](http://www.theithacajournal.com/toxic).

Residents also have established their own Web site on the issue at <http://6sys.noip.info/~tjweber/ship/>.

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TCE is a potentially carcinogenic chemical that was used by the former Morse Chain plant, now owned by Emerson Power Transmission. Used to degrease chain made at the plant, TCE and a host of other

the responsible party, to offer her a mitigation system. After the system was installed, indoor air samples were taken on April 21 in the two levels of her basement and on the first floor. The results came back with a reading of 3.3 micrograms per cubic meter of TCE on the first floor, while the other two readings were below the detection threshold.

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"It was not expected and yes, Emerson was surprised," David Baldrige, a spokesman for the company, said in an e-mail.

In response, Environmental Strategies Consulting, which is based out of Reston, Va., and sub-contracted by Emerson, sent two employees to test Snoyer's home Wednesday using a PPB RAE. A hand-held device that looks like an oversized walkie-talkie with a souped up antenna, the PPB RAE can detect volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, at very low levels.

"One guy described it to me like looking for a book three-sixteenths of an inch thick in a stack a mile high," said Tom Suozzo, P.E., an environmental engineer for the state Department of Environmental Conservation. "It's really getting down almost to a single molecule."

The hope was to detect areas of concentrated VOCs, which would indicate a potential source of the TCE in air samples. While nothing conclusive was found, suspicions surrounded the fireplace and chimney, particularly its foundation in the basement. Cracks in the cement there caused "small blips" on the PPB RAE, according to Janet Snoyer.

Suozzo was optimistic that with the filling in of cracks around the home and in the chimney walls, the problem would be resolved. Once potential leaks are filled up, Suozzo plans another round of indoor air testing, this time with two labs performing tests at the same time, to evaluate their success.

"We do see some anomalies once in a while but that doesn't mean we can't correct them," he said.

**Contact:** [jdaley@ithaca.gannett.com](mailto:jdaley@ithaca.gannett.com)

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