SHINE Program
Superfund Health INvestigation & Education
Redmond Tallow Company Public Health Consultation
Summary Fact Sheet- April 2003

The Oregon SHINE Program evaluated the public health significance of nitrates found in the groundwater at the Redmond Tallow Company facility in Redmond. The people that may be affected by the nitrates in the water are the families and individuals that live on or work at the site.

SHINE concluded that exposure to nitrates in the water from wells on the site (found to be above 10 milligrams/liter) poses a public health hazard.

Infants less than six months of age are of most concern for health risks from high levels of nitrates in water. An illness known as methemoglobinemia, or "blue baby syndrome", hinders the blood's ability to carry oxygen to the body tissues and can cause a darkening or bluish color of the skin, especially around the mouth, eyes and under the fingernails and toenails. This syndrome can cause the baby to be cranky and to have abnormal breathing. High nitrate levels may also be a factor for other health concerns in people that drink the water on a regular basis.

A copy of the Public Health Consultation can be accessed at www.healthoregon.org/superfund. Program staff will also be available to answer questions about the health consultation at a public hearing and information session co-sponsored with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). This meeting will be held at Redmond High School, 675 SW Rimrock Drive on Thursday, May 15th, from 6-9 PM. Public health officials from the Deschutes County Health Department, the Deschutes County Environmental Health Division and SHINE will be present. There will be a brief presentation, and then there will be a chance to talk with staff about any health concerns.

Who is most likely to be affected by nitrates in the groundwater?

- Infants under 1 year of age
- Women that are pregnant or nursing
- Adults that are undergoing dialysis or that suffer from chronic liver or kidney disease
- Some cancer patients going through chemotherapy
- Elderly persons
- Adults that have a genetic predisposition to methemoglobinemia
- People who use nitro, nitrate, nitrite, aniline or nitroso-based medications
- People who handle or use nitrate, nitrite or aniline or nitroso-based chemicals in the workplace or in hobbies

How can I prevent my family's exposure to high nitrate levels in water?

- **Do not** consume water that contains more than 10 milligrams per liter of nitrates
- **Do not** add high-nitrate water to food products or to beverages, **especially baby formula**
- **Use bottled water** for drinking, preparing food and mixing baby formula if water has high-nitrate levels
- **You may** use water high in nitrates for other uses, such as irrigation, washing, and bathing because they do not result in nitrate absorption
- **You may** drink water from wells that neighbor the site with safe nitrate levels
- **Do** test well water each year for nitrates and learn more about safe well water at www.wellwater.orst.edu

For more information, please call staff from the SHINE Program:

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