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Attorneys Believe Blackwell Contaminated With Chemicals



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BLACKWELL — Attorneys Keith Langston, Cameron Spradling and Ben Barnes told Blackwell citizens last night that their city is contaminated with lead, arsenic, and cadmium poisoning.

The group visited Blackwell in January with a group of environmentalist who took samples of many things.

Barnes said the tests show high levels of the contaminants in the top soil.

Langston also told the crowd that the town's drinking water was safe.

"We did test people's tap water and I want to reassure everybody that there is nothing wrong with the water," said Langston.

"You can drink the water that comes out of your faucet. But with regards to the lead and the arsenic in the dirt, in the air and in the dust in your houses, that is a different story. It is highly likely that most of you in this room have a significant amount of lead in arsenic in your homes and in the dirt around your homes. It is at a level that would be considered contaminated by the EPA."

The attorneys showed little faith in efforts by Phelps Dodge recently saying that they would not expect testing by the company to be accurate.

Langston said the types of problems that can be caused by lead and arsenic poisoning are broad and include death.

"They can not be described in one page and in short terms," he said.

Langston said the lead and arsenic contaminates are in the top soil levels. He explained what happens when you put a house on top of the contamination.

"If you put a house on top of lead and arsenic contaminated soil the foundation covers it up and it can't get out. You have to get lead and arsenic on your skin and in your breathing or through your digestive tract some way for it to hurt you. If it is covered up with a structure it can't hurt you. But the arsenic and lead contamination is in a portion of the ground that shouldn't be much more than three or four inches deep and that is why it is dangerous. You touch it when you garden, your children touch it when they play and you track it in your home."

Spradling referred to Blackwell as a "toxic tort site" and a historical accident."

He explained that environmentalist came and did every type of test and dust check possible and sent them to Texas A&M for testing and that results showed that the newer houses are just as contaminated as the old ones.

The trio will be at the Blackwell VFW Banquet Hall located at 1006 West Ferguson Avenue from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday to speak with citizens about their concerns.

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