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Low levels of chemicals continue to be found in creek water downstream from the site of a burned chemical plant in Athens-Clarke County and as a result, the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) will continue to test water quality in the area.

The J&J Chemical Co. plant caught fire July 28 and runoff from the firefighting carried the chemicals para-dichlorobenzene and formaldehyde into nearby Trail Creek, which flows into the North Oconee and Oconee rivers. The runoff also contained a non-toxic blue dye, which the company used to produce a toilet bowl cleaner.

The latest test results show levels of formaldehyde at 350 parts per billion (ppb) and 240 ppb at Olympic Drive and Dudley Park, respectively. Those levels are higher than samples taken a week earlier and may be the result of rain washing chemicals from low lying areas along the creek. Para-dichlorobenzene was measured at 170 ppb at Olympic Drive, but was not detected at Dudley Park. While chemical concentrations at those levels do not pose a threat to human health, EPD will continue to recommend people and pets stay out of the creek.

EPD also has completed another round of testing for the city of Greensboro drinking water system. The latest results, like the earlier samples, did not show the presence of chemicals. Greensboro's drinking water taps are closest to the plant site, although they are 23 miles downstream and across a portion of Lake Oconee.

EPD also has approved the company's site remediation plan, which explains the measures the company will take to properly clean up the soil contamination on the property and the sediment in the creek. The site remediation is expected to be completed no later than January 2011.

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