

N. Boulder residents win water suit

Centerline may appeal \$4.1 million verdict over well contamination

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A Boulder County company must pay its former North Boulder neighbors \$4.1 million to help clean up the mess it made of their ground water, a jury ruled Tuesday.

The six-person jury deliberated about seven hours before returning a verdict in favor of 105 residents from the Crestview neighborhood. Jurors heard nearly four weeks of testimony.

While the decision is good news for

the neighbors, both sides agree that the matter is far from settled. The company, Centerline Circuits Inc., is considering an appeal.

The neighbors filed suit against Centerline in August 1993, charging the company flushed at least two toxic solvents into its septic system when it operated a circuit board manufacturing plant nearby for 10 years until 1978, when it moved to Longmont.

The chemicals, trichloroethane and dichloroethene, found their way into the ground water and into wells of several Crestview neighbors.

Crestview lawyers on Monday asked the jury for \$7.4 million in damages, \$6 million to further study and clean up the contamination, the rest to hook up

the neighborhood to city water and sewer, medical monitoring and other damages for 10 "representative" neighbors among the 105.

Boulder lawyer Scott Jurdem, representing Crestview, said after the \$4.1 million verdict — which included \$3 million to clean up the ground water — that he was satisfied with half the asking price.

"I think the jury did justice. It appears that what is crystal clear is that they want the neighborhood cleaned up," he said.

Centerline lawyer Thomas Nichols, who Monday asked the jury to be reasonable in its deliberations, said he was disappointed that the jury found the
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THE SETTLEMENT

The jury's findings included:

- Centerline was negligent in polluting the wells and created a nuisance for Crestview residents.
- The company should pay \$3 million to a "remediation fund," half of which would be spent to further study the extent of the contamination, and half to contain and clean it up.
- Centerline should pay \$745,000 to connect all 105 residents in the suit to city of Boulder water and sewer and pay the fees required for annexation to the city. In an early offer, Centerline offered to pay about half that amount.
- The company should pay \$22,500 each to the 10 representative residents for medical monitoring of their future health, for a total of \$225,000.
- Centerline should pay damages totaling \$165,000 to eight representative residents to compensate for loss of use and enjoyment of their homes. The individual awards ranged from \$50,000 to \$10,000.
- The company should pay nothing for loss of market value of residents' homes.
- It also owes nothing for emotional distress.