Crestwood officials cut corner and supplied residents with tainted water for 2 decades

By Michael Hawthorne
Staff Reporter

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nances related to a dry-cleaning solvent had seeped into the water, records show.

The village avoided scrutiny by telling state regulators in 1984 that they would get all of their tap water from Lake Michigan, and would use the well only in an emergency. But records show Crestwood kept drawing water from a well for up to 20 percent of the village’s water supply some months.

The well wasn’t shut off for good until Dec. 2005, after the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency tested the water for the first time in more than 20 years.

The agency found not only that the well was still contaminated with dangerous levels of vinyl chloride, a byproduct of dry cleaning.

Since then, the EPA has cited Crestwood twice for violating environmental laws, yet has failed to notify people who drank the well water for years.

The agency continues to investigate, but in an Illinois Attorney Gen. Lisa Madigan’s office also is looking into the matter.

The most likely source of the contamination is a strip mall less than 300 feet from Crestwood’s well, just across a narrow, tree-lined creek.

Crestwood continued on A2

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

Poison in the Well

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