

How safe is your water?

BLACKRIDGE: Signs of vandalism leave residents suspicious of reservoir

STEPHANIE SAVILLE

HOW safe is your drinking water? Not as safe as one may hope, it appears.

Residents in the Blackridge area have expressed concern after it was discovered that the reservoir supplying them with water is left open to possible sabotage and contamination.

A resident who asked not to be named said he first discovered that the security of the reservoir near Albany and Uplands roads was seriously compromised when he took his dogs walking in the area.

Besides the fact that the fence is badly damaged, covers from some of the vents have been removed, directly exposing the contents of the reservoir to the elements.

He said on Monday that he reported the matter to Umgeni Water a week ago, but nothing was done to secure the reservoir in that time.

"I feel a little nervous," said the resident. "Anything could happen. Those vents are covered for a reason."

The resident also described what he found on the roof of the reservoir, something he is concerned could be the work of Satanists.

"There was a candle in the centre, with playing cards laid out around it. There was also a toilet roll and R36 in coins scattered around, which I picked up and spent."

The presence of the toilet roll led another resident to speculate that whoever left it there may have purposefully defecated in the water.

"At least two of the vents are open. Many of us are worried," he said. He added that the playing cards, which are an expensive brand, were left there deliberately, and also specula-



Cow dung next to one of the uncovered vents on top of the Blackridge reservoir.



The fence that is supposed to keep vandals away from Blackridge's water supply



Possible evidence of satanic rituals that took place on the top of the Blackridge reservoir.

cent months." Harichunder admitted that vandalism and theft are problems at the Blackridge Reservoir.

"In 2009, there were three water supply disruptions as a direct result of vandalism or theft. Metal valves and chamber covers have been stolen. Plastic covers are now being used, but as soon as they are replaced, they get vandalised."

He said there have been at least four instances in which fences have been damaged or removed. "The removal of fences, therefore, allows access to the property. Acts of vandalism are reported immediately to our municipal customers, in whose areas of jurisdiction the vandalised property is situated."

Harichunder said that, as fast as the fence and vents are mended or replaced, they are removed or damaged.

He said there is no security guard at the site, but he appealed to communities who live close to infrastructure owned or managed by the Umgeni Water to help by reporting potential or actual acts of vandalism to the organisation.

He stressed that people are not allowed to go near the reservoir.

Speaking to *The Witness*, water scientist Dr Mark Graham expressed concern that the open vents could allow rats and mice and bats to enter the reservoir.

"But often there is a residual chlorine in the water to counter growths in pipes. So this should cope by and large with that kind of contamination. There is also a vast volume of water in the reservoir so the dilution rate would be enormous."



PHOTOS: MARK WING
The only completely hooded vent on top of the Blackridge reservoir, with other uncovered vents visible in the background.

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UMGENI WATER SPOKESPERSON SHAMI HARICHUNDER

ted that it was the work of Satanists. He expressed fear that Satanists may want to harm others by contaminating the water.

A scan of the Internet revealed that rituals involving candles, coins and cards are sometimes used in rituals by people wishing to create more wealth for themselves.

Responding to questions posed to Umgeni Water, spokesperson Shami

Harichunder said the water stored at the Blackridge Reservoir is monitored fortnightly. "Any form of contamination will be discovered in the monitoring process and corrective measures taken to remove the contaminants."

"There have been no reported cases of contaminants in the water in re-