

# Douglassville Disposal

Superfund Fact Sheet -October 1994

U.S. EPA Region III

## What's Happening at Douglassville Disposal?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed the incineration plans for the Douglassville Disposal Site. The Corps will oversee the activities and will hire an incineration contractor. The clean-up will likely begin sometime next year and will include incinerating the oily filter cake and drainage-way wastes.

EPA will pay for the clean-up expenses but may try to recover those costs from Potentially Responsible Parties after finishing the cleanup activities. Potentially Responsible Parties are individuals or companies that may be responsible for the contamination at a site. Presently, none of the identified Potentially Responsible Parties have expressed the desire or ability to clean-up the site. EPA also is working with the State of Pennsylvania, which is required to pay 10% of EPA's costs.

## What is Incineration?

Douglassville Disposal is one of many Superfund sites where EPA is using incineration. An incinerator burns hazardous wastes in a controlled, enclosed chamber. It destroys organic compounds and reduces the volume of waste. The process is very effective and is odorless and smokeless. Incineration consists of four basic steps:

1. Feed wastes into the incinerator.
2. Burns wastes at a high temperature. This destroys organic compounds and breaks them down into products such as ash, carbon dioxide, and water vapor.
3. Collect, cool, and remove the ashes from the incinerator.
4. Cool and clean the remaining gasses. Release the cleaned air.

## What is the History of the Site?

In 1941, Berks Associates, Inc. began a lubricating oil recycling business at the site. The site is located on approximately 50 acres near the town of Douglassville (see map below). The company also began recycling waste solvents during the 1950's and 1960's. For many years, Berks stored wastes from the oil and solvent recycling in lagoons in the northern half of the site. In November of 1970, ten straight days of heavy rains overflowed these lagoons to and broke safety dikes. The overflow released 2 to 3 million gallons of waste. In June of 1972, Hurricane Agnes caused the Schuylkill River to overflow and flood the site. The flood released 6 to 8 million gallons of waste. These wastes flowed as far as 15 miles downstream.

EPA began investigating and sampling the site in April 1982. The tests showed volatile organic contaminants in the drinking water used by Berks Associates employees. EPA also sampled the Schuylkill River, the facility discharge area, the drainage swale, and a domestic well. EPA proposed the site for placement on the National Priorities List (NPL) in December 1982. EPA named the site to the NPL in September 1983. The NPL is EPA's list of the most serious waste sites in the country.

Beginning in 1984, EPA began Phase I of its Remedial Investigation/ Feasibility Study (RI/FS) activities. EPA signed a Record of Decision after a public comment period in September 1985 recommending to contain the wastes. A Record of Decision is a document explaining the clean-up method to be used at a Superfund Site. In late 1985, Berks Associates, Inc. stopped all oil recycling operations at the site.

In April 1988, EPA completed a Focused Feasibility Study to address additional site contamination. EPA signed a new Record of Decision, also after a public comment period, in June 1988. This Record of Decision required removing, dismantling, decontaminating, and disposing the on-site tank farm. In 1987-1988, EPA began Phase II RI/FS activities to study the remaining site contamination. A third Record of Decision, signed in June 1989, recommended excavating, incinerating, and capping all sludges and contaminated soils.

## **What is Superfund?**

On December 2, 1970, the United States government created the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). In 1980, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), commonly known as Superfund, was enacted. Superfund is funded by a tax on the petroleum and chemical industries. CERCLA gives EPA the authority and resources to directly respond to hazardous releases that could endanger human health or the environment, such as air pollution, water pollution, radiation, and pesticides. It is EPA's job under Superfund to investigate and supervise the cleanup of those hazardous wastes.

EPA places the nation's worst hazardous waste sites on the National Priorities List (NPL). These sites are called Superfund sites. EPA addresses all concerns about human health and the environment at these sites. Under Superfund, EPA determines the best methods to clean up those sites.

EPA asks all Potentially Responsible Parties for a site to pay for the cleanup. If none are found or those identified are unable to pay, EPA pays for the cleanup. EPA may pursue the Potentially Responsible Parties legally to recover its clean-up costs.

For more information please write or call Larry Brown, EPA's Community Involvement Coordinator, at:

[Larry Brown](#)

U.S. EPA Region III (3EA30)

Community Involvement Coordinator  
1650 Arch St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029  
215-814-5527  
brown.larry@epa.gov

## **The Purpose of Community Relations in Superfund**

EPA uses community relations activities to communicate with the public. EPA assigns a Community Involvement Facilitator to each Superfund site to help keep the public aware of and involved with site activities. Larry Brown is the EPA Community Involvement Coordinator assigned to the Douglassville Site.

To help EPA better understand and meet the needs of the Douglassville community, we will be revising the Community Relations Plan for the Douglassville Disposal Site. A Community Relations Plan is EPA's plan, tailored to the site, to involve the community in clean-up work.

We will be interviewing citizens to identify your concerns about the Douglassville Disposal Site. If you would like to be interviewed, please fill out the form on page three and send it to us. We will get back to you as soon as possible to schedule the interview.

EPA encourages the public to participate in the clean-up process at Superfund Sites. To do this, EPA establishes Information Centers for each site. Information such as fact sheets and the Administrative Record, which contains all the information EPA used to make its decision about the site, are available for the public. The Douglassville Disposal Site Information Center is located at the Union Township Municipal Building in Douglassville.