

Galaxy/Spectron Inc

ELKTON, MARYLAND

U.S. EPA, REGION III FACT SHEET MAY 1997

EPA APPROVES RI/FS WORK PLAN

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently approved the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) Work Plan for the Galaxy/Spectron, Inc. Superfund Site (Spectron Site). The Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) submitted the work plan under an agreement signed with EPA in May 1996, in which a number of PRPs agreed to perform the RI/FS. (PRPs are those parties who are or appear to be responsible for the contamination at a site.)

The RI/FS is composed of two studies. The first study, called a remedial investigation, identifies the types, amounts, and extent of contamination at a site and the effects those contaminants may have on people and the environment. The second study, called a feasibility study, describes and compares different methods for site cleanup based on the information in the remedial investigation.

Although a significant amount of information about the site already exists, the information has been collected for the emergency work conducted at the site. Several areas require further investigation before EPA can prepare a final clean-up plan.

The objectives of the RI/FS for the Spectron Site include:

- determining if any significant contamination is moving away from the site property in the deeper bedrock ground water,
- determining the size of the area with soil contamination,
- gaining a better understanding of the geology beneath the site,
- determining what potential risks the site presents to the community and the environment, and
- developing potential clean-up methods for the site.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN UPCOMING MONTHS

In the upcoming months, EPA will collect ground water samples around the site using sampling trucks. A machine attached to the back of the trucks, called a cone penetrometer, will push a sampling device into the ground and collect the ground water samples. The cone penetrometer, a relatively new method for sampling ground water, allows EPA to collect samples at a faster rate than older methods. Residents can expect to see samples collected from both the north and south ends of the site property. If any samples are needed from residential properties, EPA will ask residents for permission to sample their property prior to doing so.

EPA will use a similar method to collect soil samples on and around the site. The samples will determine what kinds of contaminants are present and how far the contamination extends.

Additionally, EPA will conduct geophysical tests to measure the bedrock beneath the site. EPA will use the results of these tests to better understand how the ground water flows beneath the site. The results also will help determine if significant contamination is flowing away from the site.

TANK REMOVAL

EPA recently negotiated with the owner of the Spectron Site to remove all of the empty stainless steel tanks from the site. The owner also removed some of the other steel tanks, wooden debris, and a metal building.

UPDATE ON LITTLE ELK CREEK REMOVAL ACTION

At a meeting on April 21, 1997, EPA reviewed the PRPs 75 % design plans for the seep collection system. The PRPs are continuing to work on the design of the proposed system. Due to Providence Road bridge construction this summer, construction of the seep collection system is not expected to begin until the fall of 1998.

SITE HISTORY

The Spectron Site is an eight-acre property located about seven miles north of the town of Elkton, in northeastern Cecil County, Maryland. From the mid-1800s until 1946, several paper manufacturers operated water-powered paper mills at the property. After a fire destroyed the last paper mill in 1946, the property was left vacant until Galaxy Chemicals, Inc. purchased the site in 1961. From 1962 to 1988 property owners used the site as a recycling and treatment facility for wastes generated by the electronic, pharmaceutical, paint, lacquer, coatings, and chemical industries. During that time, the site operated under three names: Galaxy Chemical (1962-1976); Solvent Distillers, Inc. (1976-1978); and Spectron, Inc. (1978-1988).

Soon after Galaxy began operations in 1962, area residents began complaining of foul odors coming from wastes at the site. Complaints about the odors increased greatly throughout the late 1960s, and several residents filed suit against the company in 1969, seeking damages for alleged exposure-related health effects. In December 1970 and April 1971, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) conducted air, soil, surface water, and ground water sampling at the site. The sampling efforts showed high levels of contamination in the air, tap water, Little Elk Creek, ground water, and a sump at the site.

Operations continued at the site until 1975 when Galaxy filed for bankruptcy. In 1976, Solvent Distillers, Inc. began new waste reclamation operations at the site. The company changed its name to

Spectron Inc. in 1978 and continued the reclamation operations. Because of repeated environmental problems and permit violations, the State of Maryland denied Spectron's permit application to continue operations in 1989. Spectron, Inc. closed and the owner declared bankruptcy.

At the request of the State of Maryland, EPA investigated the site in April 1989 to evaluate the need for a removal action. EPA's investigation confirmed the presence of approximately 500,000 gallons of flammable liquids and numerous organic compounds in the soil and ground water. The investigation also found that many tanks on the site were highly unstable and susceptible to fire or explosion.

In May 1989, EPA began an emergency response action to remove the waste liquid stored in the tanks and to remove over 1,300 drums of waste from the site. Additionally, EPA posted a 24-hour fire and security watch at the site. Under EPA's supervision, the PRPs completed the emergency action in 1990.

After continued evaluations of the property, EPA added the site to the National Priorities List (NPL) in 1994. The NPL is EPA's list of the nation's most serious hazardous waste sites that are eligible for clean-up funding from the Federal Superfund program.

TAG GRANT AVAILABLE

As part of the Superfund community relations program, EPA provides Technical Assistant Grants (TAGs) of up to \$50,000. The TAG program enables citizens residing near a site to hire a technical expert to review and interpret site reports generated by EPA or other parties. Only one group per site can receive a TAG, so EPA urges local residents and groups to join together to apply. For information on how to apply for a TAG contact [Carrie Deitzel](#), the EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, at 1-800-553-2509.

EPA CONTACTS

If you have questions or comments about the Spectron Site, please contact one of the EPA representatives listed below:

Carrie Deitzel (3HW43)
Community Involvement Coordinator
1650 Arch St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029
800-553-2509
215-814-5525
deitzel.carrie@epa.gov

Randy Sturgeon (3HW23)
Remedial Project Manager
1650 Arch St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029
215-814-3227
sturgeon.randy@epa.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information about the Spectron Site, please review the Administrative Record File. The Administrative Record File is EPA's official collection of documents, data, reports, and other information that support EPA's decision on cleaning up a site. You may review the Administrative Record File at the address listed below.

Cecil County Library
301 Newark Avenue
Elkton, MD 21903
410-996-5600

Hours: Monday - Thursday 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Friday - Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

You also may call to make an appointment to review the file at the EPA Administrative Records Room in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by calling 215-814-3157.