

EPA to Investigate Vapor Intrusion Problem

Reilly Tar & Chemical Site

St. Louis Park, Minnesota

February 2011

Availability sessions

EPA is holding informal availability sessions about the vapor intrusion testing near the Reilly Tar & Chemical site on Thursday, March 3, at the St. Louis Park Public Library, 3240 Library Lane. Please drop in between 2-4 p.m. or 6-8 p.m. to visit with an EPA representative.

For more information

For more information about the Reilly Tar & Chemical site, please contact:

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Project documents are available at the site information repository:

St. Louis Park Public Library 3240
Library Lane

or at:

[www.epa.gov/region5/sites/
reillytar/npl/](http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/reillytar/npl/)

[http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/npl/
minnesota/MND980609804.htm](http://www.epa.gov/R5Super/npl/minnesota/MND980609804.htm)

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency are trying to find out if vapors from contaminated underground water supplies in the vicinity of the Reilly Tar & Chemical Superfund site are causing indoor air pollution in nearby homes. This fact sheet provides an update on the proposed testing activities, gives a brief background on the site history and answers frequently asked questions about the testing.

In late February and early March, EPA will be contacting residents to seek permission to test the air below their basements, slabs or crawl spaces. This is called “sub-slab” sampling, which tests for gases that may be collecting beneath building foundations. At issue is an environmental problem called “vapor intrusion” that occurs when chemicals in the underground water give off potentially hazardous gases that can rise up through the soil and seep into buildings through foundation cracks and holes.

Sampling of residences where permission has been given will be conducted in late March or early April. EPA contractors will be visiting homes to install the sampling equipment during normal business hours.

Site background

The 80-acre Reilly Tar & Chemical site is bound to the north by West 32nd Street and to the south by Walker Street in St. Louis Park. The property extends east of Louisiana Avenue and about 1,200 feet west of Louisiana Avenue.

The Reilly Tar location was used for coal tar distillation and wood preserving from 1917 to 1972. The site was sold to St. Louis Park and converted to recreational and residential uses in 1972. Waste was disposed of on-site in several ditches that flowed to an adjacent wetland. The wastes generated by Reilly Tar were mostly polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which contaminated the soil and ground water beneath the site. About 43,000 people use the ground water from aquifers near the site, but the treated drinking water is safe from site pollution.

In 1982 EPA provided funds to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to clean two contaminated wells that had been used to dispose of site wastes. In 1984 EPA issued a legal order, and Reilly Tar & Chemical constructed a treatment system to clean two contaminated municipal wells, restore drinking water, and stop site wastes from contaminating additional wells. The company, EPA and MPCA subsequently signed a consent decree in September 1986. Additional pumping wells and treatment facilities were installed from the late 1980s to mid-1990s.

To monitor these cleanup activities, the federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA known as the Superfund law) requires a five-year review process for contaminated sites such as Reilly Tar.

The purpose of this requirement is to make sure that sites that are cleaned up continue to protect human health and the environment. There have been three five-year reviews conducted by MPCA and EPA for the Reilly Tar site in 1996, 2001 and 2006.

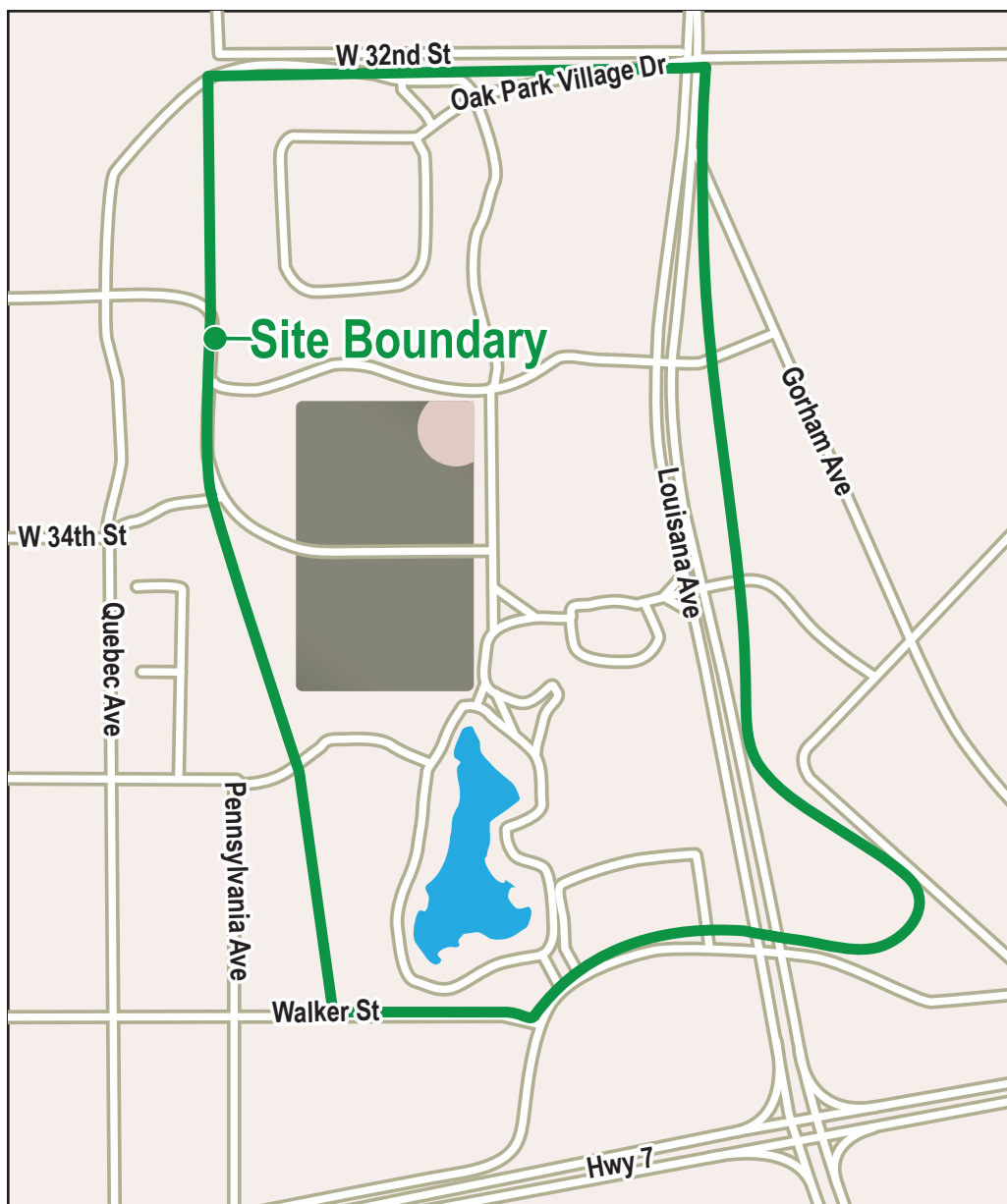
The second five-year review in 2001 concluded that cleanup actions were protecting human health but recommended additional ground water monitoring and testing be performed to ensure long-term protection.

In September 2006, the third five-year review concluded the treatment system to clean the contaminated wells continues to provide safe drinking water and protect human health and the environment. However, ground water testing indicated the potential for contamination in the Prairie du Chien aquifer and possible vapor intrusion into buildings near the site.

Recommendations of 2006 review

The following are some of the recommendations and follow-up actions from the 2006 five-year review:

- Evaluate the need for additional monitoring and pumping schemes of wells.
- Monitor the possible vertical flow of contamination between underground drinking water aquifers.
- Evaluate the potential for vapor intrusion into on-site buildings.
- Prepare site controls, such as signs, to restrict access and protect human health.
- Evaluate monitoring, well construction and compliance with Minnesota Department of Health well codes.



Site Location

Frequently asked questions

Q Why are some households being asked to participate and others not?

A Properties have been identified for testing, because they are located on or near the Reilly Tar & Chemical Superfund site where EPA would like to test for possible PAH contamination. PAHs are chemicals that are formed during the incomplete burning of coal, oil, gas, garbage and other organic substances, and are found in coal tar, crude oil, creosote and roofing tar.

Q Is the drinking water safe?

A Yes, the city's drinking water is safe. Drinking water is drawn from deep aquifers that have been treated and tested.

Q Why is the sub-slab testing necessary?

A Testing is necessary to identify specific locations where contamination may be present so that cleanup activities can be planned, if necessary, to ensure the health of residents. For more information on the health effects of PAHs go to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry information page at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/substances/toxsubstance.asp?toxid=25.

Q How will sampling be done?

A With the owner's permission, EPA will test the soil gas under properties to determine if any contamination is present. It will take about two weeks for workers to test all of the homes near the site. EPA contractors will drill a small hole in the basement or crawl space floor to collect a sub-slab sample. The hole will be filled or patched once the sampling has been completed. Collecting the samples for PAHs will take a few hours (partially automated). Collecting samples for another class of chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOCs) will take 24 hours (automated). Sub-slab samples will be taken because they can be more accurate than indoor air samples, which can be compromised by the presence of common household products such as cleaners and paint. The

sub-slab sample will be sent to a certified laboratory for analysis. If contamination is detected below the surface, EPA may conduct further sampling, or facilitate installation of cleanup systems.

Q Why are we concerned about PAH contamination?

A There is usually no detectable odor from low levels of PAHs. Breathing these low levels for long periods, however, may increase the risk of health problems. EPA wants to protect people's health by identifying and eliminating any harmful vapors in people's basements, even if the risks are very low.

Q If PAHs are detected under my property, what then?

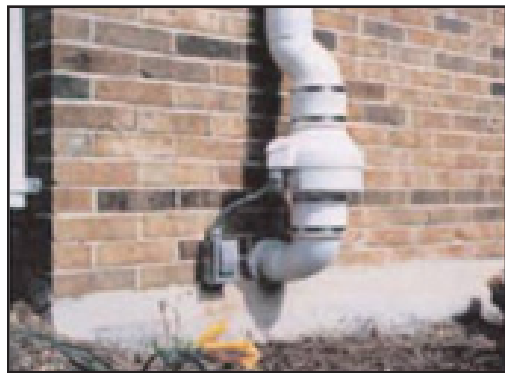
A If the sample results indicate PAHs above safe levels, EPA will quickly work with the affected residents and owners to determine if further testing or mitigation is needed. EPA will facilitate a response to any immediate health threat using its emergency authority under federal law, if necessary.

Q Where can I learn more about vapor intrusion?

A If you would like more information, go to www.epa.gov/ada/gw/vapor.html.



Sub-slab sampling canister and probe.



A vapor removal system.

Question & Answer Sessions

EPA is holding informal question and answer sessions about the air quality testing and the Reilly Tar & Chemical site on:


Thursday, March 3
St. Louis Park Public Library
3240 Library Lane
2-4 p.m. or 6-8 p.m

This fact sheet is printed on paper made of recycled fibers.

AIR QUALITY SAMPLING UPDATE: Reilly Tar & Chemical Corporation (St. Louis Park Plant)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS


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