NPL Site Narrative for Allegany Ballistics Laboratory (USNAVY)

ALLEGANY BALLISTICS LABORATORY (USNAVY)
Mineral County, West Virginia

Allegany Ballistics Laboratory (ABL) is located in Mineral County, West Virginia, approximately 2 miles south of Cresaptown, Maryland. ABL occupies 1,628 acres and is situated on the flood plain of the North Branch of the Potomac River, along the West Virginia-Maryland state border. Surrounding land use is primarily agricultural with some forestry. The facility has been in operation since 1942, primarily for the research, development, and testing of solid propellants and motors for rockets, ammunition, and armaments for the Navy. ABL houses two operating plants. Plant 1 is owned by the Navy and occupies 1,572 acres of the ABL facility. The remaining 56 acres are owned and operated by Hercules, Inc. The area referred to as Plant 2, or the Hercopel Plant was not included by EPA under CERCLA because no releases of hazardous materials are known to be associated with this facility.

Operations at ABL have generated a variety of explosive and solvent wastes. Until 1978, the majority of these wastes were disposed of in onsite disposal areas. From 1970 to 1981, some of the waste was stored in a drum storage area. Waste disposal and handling practices at the facility have resulted in several source areas of concern. Seven of these areas were aggregated into one source known as the Northern Riverside Waste Disposal Area (NRWDA). Other contamination sources include two previous burning ground areas; an inert non-ordnance landfill; a spent photographic developing solutions disposal areas; a sensitivity test area/surface water impoundment; and a beryllium landfill. Other sources of potential contamination exist at the site including a waste burning operation for the disposal of contaminated material.

NRWDA is located at the northern boundary of the ABL property along the south bank of the North Branch of the Potomac River. The seven sites that make up NRWDA are an ordnance burning ground; an inert burning ground; a former solvent waste disposal pit; three acid disposal pits; a hazardous waste drum storage area; and an incinerator landfill. These sources were aggregated due to their proximity and the similarity of the hazardous substances deposited in the sites. In addition, the bedrock under the site is folded and fractured.

Contaminants associated with these sources and detected in ground water and soil samples include explosives, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), acids, bases, laboratory and industrial wastes, bottom sludge from solvent recovery, metal plating pretreatment sludge, paints, and thinners. Some contaminants have moved offsite and were detected in the North Branch of the Potomac River, adjacent to the site.

Two ABL water supply wells were temporarily taken out of service in 1981 because they were found to contain VOCs. The wells were then used only as backups during drought conditions. The wells are not currently hooked-up to the supply system. Recent testing of these wells, as well as numerous monitoring wells in the developed area, shows consistent contamination of the ground water with VOCs.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see

the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at ATSDR - ToxFAQs (http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.