NPL Site Narrative for Valmont TCE

VALMONT TCE
West Hazleton, Pennsylvania

Conditions at Proposal (June 14, 2001): The Valmont TCE site in Hazle Township and West Hazleton Borough, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania consists of the former Chromatex Plant #2, on Jaycee Dr. near Deer Run Rd., and contaminated ground water in the nearby residential neighborhood on Deer Run Rd., Bent Pine Trail/Rd., Twin Oaks Rd., and possibly Fawn Dr. The former Chromatex Plant #2 is located at the edge of a large industrial park, and the residential neighborhood is located approximately 100 feet northeast of its property boundary. Ground water contamination at the site was discovered in October 1987 when sampling of residential drinking water wells revealed the presence of trichloroethylene (TCE) and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in 23 residential wells and in the Chromatex facility well. EPA immediately provided bottled water and carbon filters to affected residences and subsequently oversaw the installation of public water supply lines into the neighborhood. The total population currently served by ground water wells within four miles of the site is over 26,000.

Chromatex operated at Plant #2 from July 1978 until April 2001. From 1978 to 1988, TCE was used as a carrier in the application of stain repellent to upholstery fabric. There were two 5,000-gallon storage tanks for TCE inside the plant, and a 10,000-gallon underground storage tank (UST) outside the building. The UST was used for emergency spillage or overflow of material from the indoor tanks. Floor drains inside the plant carried spent TCE to the UST.

Investigations in the fall of 1987 revealed that one of the indoor tanks had developed pinhole leaks, and that the UST contained approximately 10,000 gallons of TCE-contaminated wastewater and several hundred gallons of bottom sludge. The lines associated with the UST were excavated, uncovering a break in the feed line to the UST. TCE was detected in several soil samples collected from trenches that held the pipes, and in a solidified latex sample. Chromatex later removed the UST and plugged and filled the floor drains inside the plant.

Chromatex had also operated a vapor recovery system to reclaim TCE used during the stain repellent application process. An activated carbon adsorption unit was part of the vapor recovery system. In May 1988, carbon was found on the roof after a Chromatex employee recalled an accident with the TCE recovery system about four years earlier. Samples of this carbon were found to contain TCE. Surface and subsurface soil samples were collected beneath the drain spout coming from the roof and at other locations at the rear of the facility in May 1988 and September 1993; these also contained TCE and other VOCs. In addition, soil gas samples collected in October 1987 had showed the highest TCE concentrations to be along the rear of the plant. The vapor recovery system and rooftop carbon recovery unit have now been removed.

Chromatex conducted an extent of ground water contamination study at its facility beginning in March 1988. TCE was detected in two newly-installed monitoring wells (MW-10A and MW-11) at concentrations that are highly suggestive of the presence of non-aqueous phase liquid (NAPL). Ground water samples collected by EPA from monitoring wells in 1993, and from residential wells in 1993 and 2000 (no longer being used for potable water), showed continued elevated concentrations of TCE and other VOCs. No attempt has been made to clean up the contaminated ground water.

In May 2001, EPA collected selected basement air samples in the neighborhood adjacent to the former Chromatex Plant #2, and also collected ground water samples from residential wells located further from the facility, both along Route 93 (Susquehanna Parkway) and in the Chapel Hill neighborhood. EPA is currently awaiting the results of this sampling.

Status (September 2001): EPA is considering various alternatives for this site.

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.