NPL Site Narrative for Cam-Or Inc.

CAM-OR INC.
Westville, Indiana

Conditions at Proposal (September 1997): The Cam-Or Inc (Cam-Or), waste oil refinery occupies approximately 13 acres at the intersection of State Road 2 and Highway 421 in Westville, LaPorte County, Indiana. The site is bordered by agricultural land to the east, north, and west. The Town of Westville lies to the south.

Westville Oil collected, stored, and re-refined waste oil at the facility from 1934 to 1976, until the facility was purchased by Cam-Or. Cam-Or purchased waste oil from a variety of suppliers, primarily oil changing and service stations, but also from industrial facilities, railroad yards, and pipe lines. The waste oil was re-refined and blended for sale as lubricants, primarily motor oil.

Lagoons were constructed on site around 1959 and used until 1978 to store and treat incoming waste oil and for gross separation of oil and water fractions. Analysis of samples collected in 1984 and 1985 showed that lagoon contents were contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). All of the lagoons were unlined and excavated in native sandy soil, and the lagoons' diking had a history of breaching during storm events.

Out of the 191 on-site tanks, eight retention tanks installed in the early 1980s were used to store incoming shipments of waste oil until 1987. Samples from incoming waste oil shipments were analyzed, and shipments containing PCB concentrations above 50 parts per million were routinely rejected. VOCs were also found in tank samples in 1984.

An oil spill in August 1978 was observed in Crooked Creek, more than 20 miles downstream of the site. In June 1978, state investigators traced an oil spill extending approximately 18 miles downstream of the Cam-Or site in Crooked Creek, discovered fish kills, and identified the Cam-Or site as the oil's source. In August 1980, Cam-Or reported a waste oil release to Crooked Creek. Releases of hazardous substances were further evidenced by contaminated soil adjacent to the site in the drainage ditch that leads to Crooked Creek.

Crooked Creek water is used to irrigate commercial food crops and support a trout fishery and a spawning area. Wetlands frontage along Crooked Creek totals 6,900 feet. Federally endangered species, including the Indiana bat (Myotis sodalis) and the Blanding's turtle (Emydoidea blandingii), may have habitats near the Cam-Or site. However, no threatened or endangered species have been documented along the 15-mile target distance limit.

In July 1986, a consent agreement and final order was filed wherein Cam-Or agreed to close the site. However, Cam-Or failed to proceed with the planned cleanup activities, began to voluntarily liquidate all assets, and reportedly ceased processing waste oil as of February 21, 1987. In 1987, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began a removal action to mitigate the threat of the Cam-Or site to public health and the environment.

Status (March 1998): The responsible parties undertook voluntary investigative work at the site between 1995 and 1997 that included the installation and sampling of monitoring wells, sampling of private drinking water wells, and on-site soil sampling. Based on the results of the work completed by the responsible parties, U.S. EPA obligated funds for additional field activities in 1997 to more fully determine the nature and extent of contamination at the site. This work entailed the installation and sampling of additional monitoring wells, and sampling of on- and off-site soils, surface water and sediments, and private drinking water wells. Findings to date have confirmed extensive on-site soil contamination, off-site contamination in surface water and sediments, and a ground water contamination plume that extends at least one-half mile downgradient of the site. The principal contaminant in the ground water downgradient of the site is 1,4-dioxane. In addition, low levels of contamination have been detected in several private drinking water wells within the plume. Investigative work is ongoing and will continue to focus on determining the nature and extent of contamination, and in identifying and evaluating cleanup alternatives to address the threats to human health and the environment posed by the 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.