



EPA Resumes Cleanup at Warehouse

Morris Lithium Battery Site
Morris, Illinois

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For more information

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U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will resume cleanup at the Morris Lithium Battery site where a significant fire occurred. The cleanup of hazardous (and potentially hazardous) substances from the burned materials will be addressed under Superfund's Emergency Removal Program, which has separate funds reserved to handle immediate threats to human health and the environment.

Starting this spring, EPA will consolidate hazardous substances and contaminants, package and ship all batteries in accordance with EPA and Department of Transportation regulations. EPA will also sample and analyze waste, burned material, storm water, and air at the site. All batteries and wastes will be shipped off-site for disposal.

EPA was previously on-site to stabilize the building during the winter months. Before fencing and locking the warehouse, EPA took inventory of remaining waste materials, then covered and secured materials to keep them dry.

Background

In June 2021, EPA mobilized to assist the Morris Fire Department with 24-hour air monitoring and sampling support after a fire erupted at the site located at 900 E. Benton St. The building housed over 500,000 pounds of batteries including over 140,000 pounds of lithium batteries, many of which were consumed in the fire. Lithium batteries contain a flammable electrolyte that can become pressurized when damaged, causing them to rupture. Rupture of the batteries may cause them to overheat and possibly catch fire or explode. Additional items containing potentially hazardous materials including solar panels, waste electronics were also found at the warehouse. The Morris Fire Department ordered an emergency evacuation of residents within a 1/2-mile radius of the site because of the potential exposure of hazardous substances released into the atmosphere from the smoke plume to nearby residents. EPA continued to conduct air monitoring at the site perimeter and in the surrounding neighborhood after the evacuation order was lifted in early July 2021. EPA will conduct air monitoring on and around the site during the cleanup phase of the project.



Fencing on the east side of the warehouse