NPL Site Narrative for Omega Chemical Corporation

OMEGA CHEMICAL CORPORATION
Whittier, California

Conditions at Proposal (September 29, 1998): The Omega Chemical Corporation (Omega) site is a former hazardous waste treatment and storage facility that operated from 1976 to 1991 on a 40,000-square foot property in Whittier, Los Angeles County, California. Omega conducted solvent recovery using an on-site fractionation and distillation process and operated as a storage and transfer facility for various hazardous waste classifications. Hazardous wastes stored on site contained mainly chlorinated and aromatic solvents. In June 1995, before removal activities, the Omega site consisted of thousands of drums of hazardous waste, two roll-off bins of hardened resin material, hundreds of empty but contaminated drums, numerous cylinders with capacities ranging from 15 to 20,000 pounds, and various other smaller containers of waste and/or hazardous waste. Inside the on-site warehouse there were hundreds more 55-gallon drums that Omega claimed to be product and assorted smaller containers of hazardous material.

Since 1991, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and EPA's Hazardous Waste Management Division have been actively trying to get the owner/operator to remove the wastes and clean up the site. In March 1995, the site owner/operator plead guilty to two felony counts of illegal storage and disposal of hazardous wastes. On May 9, 1995, EPA issued CERCLA Administrative Order No. 95-15 to the owner of Omega and to generators of hazardous waste that had shipped major quantities of material to Omega. During 1995, EPA's Superfund Emergency Response Office oversaw Phase I removal activities, during which contractors to a responsible party group removed all hazardous materials and wastes from the site. Phase II site activities began in November 1995 and included collection and analyses of subsurface soil and ground water at the site. Analytical results indicated that subsurface soil samples were mainly contaminated with tetrachloroethene (PCE), with lesser amounts of trichloroethene, dichloroethene and other chlorinated hydrocarbons, Freons and metals. PCE contamination was detected in soil at concentrations ranging from 1.9 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) to 510 mg/kg. Ground water samples collected at the site contained PCE up to 86,000 micrograms per liter as well as significant concentrations of other chlorinated hydrocarbons and Freons. Phase II activities documented the presence of PCE in shallow ground water in a plume that extends almost 1 mile downgradient of the site.

Although the ground water samples were collected in the shallow regional aquifer of the Lakewood Formation and most of the municipal drinking water wells draw water from the San Pedro Formation, California Department of Water Resources hydrogeologic cross-sections of the Lakewood and Upper San Pedro Formations indicate that aquifers are interconnected within 2 miles of the site.

Eight water purveyors draw ground water from 35 wells within 4 miles of the site to supply drinking water to approximately 284,270 people. The nearest well to the site is 1.3 miles to the west. This and nearly two-thirds of the wells within 4 miles draw water from the Lakewood and Upper San Pedro formation aquifers. The San Gabriel River is the nearest surface water body at approximately 2.5 miles from the site. The site is located in a mixed industrial and residential community, with residences located across Whittier Boulevard to the northeast.

Status (January 1999): EPA is considering various alternatives for 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.