

NPL Site Narrative for Pease Air Force Base

PEASE AIR FORCE BASE Newington, Portsmouth, New Hampshire

Conditions at proposal (July 14, 1989): Pease Air Force Base occupies 4,365 acres on a peninsula in Portsmouth and Newington, Rockingham County, New Hampshire. The area around the base is commercial-residential. From the 1950s to the present, the Air Force has maintained aircraft at the base. A 1986 Air Force study identified 18 waste disposal areas on the base, 13 of which received hazardous wastes, including organic solvents, pesticides, paint strippers, and other industrial wastes. The study is part of the Installation Restoration Program (IRP), established in 1978. Under this program, the Department of Defense seeks to identify, investigate, and clean up contamination from hazardous materials.

The 13 disposal areas include 7 landfills, 2 areas where waste oil and solvents were burned for fire fighting exercises, and 4 areas where solvents and other liquid wastes were discharged on the ground. At present, all hazardous wastes generated on the base are disposed of off-site at EPA-regulated facilities.

In 1977, a well supplying drinking water to 8,700 people on the base was found to be contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE) in tests conducted by an Air Force contractor. In 1984, the Air Force installed an aeration system to remove TCE from all base water supply wells. The system is no longer in use because TCE dropped below detection levels. An estimated 30,000 people obtain drinking water from public and private wells within 3 miles of hazardous substances on the base.

According to a 1988 IRP report, heptachlor and lindane are contaminating surface water along the surface run-off pathway from one of the landfills, and lead and zinc are in sediments of three major drainage ditches on the base. Shellfish are harvested from Great Bay and Little Bay, which are within 3 miles downstream of the base. The bays are also used for recreational activities.

Because the bays and Piscataqua River are connected to the Atlantic Ocean, tides can move any contamination to the ocean. The base abuts Great Bay, which is a tidal estuary. Both coastal and fresh water wetlands are along surface water migration pathways from the disposal areas.

Some disposal areas in the base are not fenced, making it possible for people and animals to come into direct contact with hazardous substances.

The base holds a permit as a hazardous waste generator and storage facility under Subtitle C of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, as well as a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit to discharge treated waste water into the Piscataqua River.

The Air Force plans to close the base and transfer the property to either the State or local government.

Status (February 21, 1990): EPA is reviewing information on the base in preparation for negotiations with the Air Force for an Interagency Agreement under CERCLA Section 120 covering further studies and remedial activities.

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) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.