

# Commodore Semiconductor Group

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region III  
Lower Providence Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania  
Fact Sheet · January 1998

## Introduction

This fact sheet provides you with an update on the Commodore Semiconductor Group Site (the site) and cleanup activities conducted during the past year. The site is in Norristown, Pennsylvania, at 950 Rittenhouse Road on the grounds of the Valley Forge Corporate Center.

## Waterline Connection Near Completion

Allen-Bradley Co. Inc., a ***potentially responsible party (PRP)*** for the site, is funding the cleanup activities. (***PRPs*** are the companies or people responsible for the contamination at a site. Whenever possible, through administrative and legal actions, EPA requires the PRPs to clean up hazardous waste sites they have contaminated.) They have hired the engineering firm, Advanced Geoservices Corporation (AGC), to conduct the cleanup activities. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversees all of AGC's cleanup activities.

In December 1996 AGC completed installing public water lines along Rittenhouse and Audubon Roads. In January 1997 AGC completed installing the connections from the public water supply lines to several homes along these roads. AGC now must close the residential wells and make the final connection to the homes, including installing a water meter. However, before AGC could make this final connection, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) had to transfer a highway occupancy permit from Allen-Bradley to the Audubon Water Company, the local water company. AGC had the permit during the waterline construction. This permit will give the Audubon Water Company access to water lines under area roads in case any problems occur that need to be fixed.

On August 8, 1997, Allen-Bradley sent the necessary documents to PennDOT to transfer the highway occupancy permit to the Audubon Water Company. The Audubon Water Company received the permit on November 18, 1997; now the transfer of ownership can be completed. AGC can begin closing residential wells and complete the connection of the homes to the public water supply. EPA will allow area residents to choose whether or not they want to be connected to the public water supply. The PRP will pay for residents to be connected to the public water supply lines.

## Remedial Design

AGC has designed plans for the cleanup work at the site. The design process includes groundwater investigations to further define how far the contamination has moved offsite. The investigations are

broken into steps which are described below. AGC has completed steps one and two and step three is ongoing.

### **Step One included:**

- examining the current condition of the groundwater,
- studying how groundwater moves beneath the site, and
- reviewing different types of groundwater removal and treatment systems.

### **Step Two included:**

- clarifying the different ways the groundwater moves beneath the site,
- understanding exactly how the site contamination has affected groundwater movement, and
- selecting locations to install and test groundwater removal wells.

### **Step Three includes:**

- testing the proposed groundwater removal wells,
- evaluating the catchment areas to determine the final locations of these wells, and
- determining how fast the wells will pump out the groundwater.

Field work for Step Three is ongoing.

## **Homes on Audubon Road Near Trooper Road**

After issuing the ROD for the site in 1992 EPA required additional groundwater investigations to confirm the extent of the plume in a southeasterly direction from the Commodore Semiconductor Group facility. The information gathered from the additional monitoring wells that were installed during the design phase investigations increased EPA's understanding of the groundwater flow system. This understanding has led to EPA's determination that the groundwater contamination detected in some of the residential wells located on Audubon Road between Trooper Road and Adams Avenue *did not* come from the site. Because the contamination did not come from the site the PRPs will not be required to replace the carbon filtration units in the homes in this area.

## **Site History**

From 1970 through 1992 Commodore Business Machines (Commodore) operated a computer chip manufacturing facility at the site. Allen-Bradley owned a portion of the site property from 1970 through 1978. During those years Commodore leased that property from Allen-Bradley. Commodore then purchased the property from Allen-Bradley in 1978. Six years later Commodore purchased the rest of what is now the site property.

Until 1975 Commodore stored wastes from their manufacturing processes in an underground concrete storage tank onsite. That same year, Commodore built an unlined steel tank next to the concrete one.

During inspections of the site, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection discovered that both tanks had leaked in the past.

In 1981 Commodore dug up contaminated soils from around the storage tank. Commodore also pumped water from a contaminated well and sprayed it onto surrounding fields allowing the contaminants to evaporate.

In 1984, through agreements between Commodore and the Audubon Water Company, Commodore installed air strippers on contaminated public water supply wells in the area. Also in 1984, Commodore installed carbon filtration units at residences that had one **part per billion** of contaminants in their wells. (**Parts per billion** is a unit of measurement commonly used to express concentrations of contaminants. For example, \$1 in \$1 billion would be one part per billion.)

On July 29, 1988, Commodore and EPA signed a legal agreement in which Commodore agreed to conduct remedial investigation and feasibility study activities. During the remedial investigation, Commodore studied the types and amounts of contamination at the site and the threat the contamination posed to human health and the environment. In the feasibility study, Commodore evaluated the information gathered during the remedial investigation and recommended cleanup methods for removing or reducing contamination at the site.

On September 29, 1992, EPA issued the Record of Decision (ROD) for the Commodore Site. The ROD outlined EPA's selected plan to clean up the contamination at the site. The main components of the cleanup plan included:

- groundwater removal and treatment and
- extension of the existing water line to affected residences.

On June 29, 1993, EPA issued a legal document to Commodore and Allen-Bradley ordering them to clean up the site contamination. Allen-Bradley has complied with the order, but Commodore has not because the company claimed bankruptcy.

In December 1994 EPA and GMT Microelectronics (GMT) entered into a **Prospective Purchaser Agreement** to allow GMT to purchase the facility from Commodore and begin operating there. (A **Prospective Purchaser Agreement** is a legal document that limits the liability of a purchaser of contaminated property and allows beneficial reuse of the property.) GMT began operating at the site in January 1995.

## For More Information

Please Contact One of These EPA Representatives:

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## **Information Repositories**

You can find more information about the Commodore Site in the Administrative Record File. The Administrative Record File is EPA's official collection of reports, letters and other documents that show EPA's process of selecting a cleanup plan for the site. You can find the File at the information repositories listed below:

Lower Providence Township Community Library

50 Park Lane Drive

Eagleville, PA 19403

610-666-6640

Contact: Lucy Ann Ennis

Hours: Monday - Thursday, 10:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Friday - Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Montgomery County Planning Commission

Montgomery County Courthouse

P.O. Box 311

Norristown, PA 19404

610-278-3745

Contact: Michael Stokes

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Administrative Records Room

U.S. EPA, Region III

1650 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

215-814-3157

Contact: Anna Butch

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

*Please call in advance for an appointment.*