

# NPL Site Narrative for Cooper Drum Company

## COOPER DRUM COMPANY South Gate, California

**Conditions at Proposal (January 11, 2001):** The Cooper Drum Company site occupies approximately 4 acres in a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial area of the city of South Gate. Drum recycling has been conducted at the site by a number of different operators since 1941. The Cooper Drum Company operated the facility from 1971 to 1992. In a 1991 interview, Cooper Drum Company representatives stated that approximately 70 percent of the drums accepted for recycling were from oil companies, with the remaining 30 percent including paint, resin, and solvent drums.

The recycling operations included reconditioning and, when warranted, heavy duty cleaning (also known as hard washing). The reconditioning operation was set up as an assembly line process along the length of an elevated concrete floor in the southern portion of the property. It essentially consisted of flushing and stripping the drums with sodium hydroxide in preparation for painting and resale. Fluids generated by the reconditioning operation were conveyed to two holding tanks and five clarifiers that bordered the north side of the elevated floor. The settled out contents were pumped out and transported off site for recycling or disposal. The liquid was circulated back into the reconditioning process. Prior to the late 1980s, the holding tanks and clarifiers consisted of open concrete sumps that were connected to each other and the reconditioning process tanks (e.g., flushers and strippers) by open concrete trenches. Since then, closed-top steel tanks have been installed over the sumps, with the sumps providing secondary containment, and the trenches have been replaced with hard piping. Drums that contain solid or highly viscous residual materials are subjected to hard washing, in addition to reconditioning. Until 1992, the hard wash operation was conducted in the northern portion of the property and consisted of placing chains and sodium hydroxide inside the drums, and then rotating the drums over four concrete sumps that were fitted with grates. The sumps were connected to each other by open concrete trenches. In 1992, the hard wash operation was moved to the east end of the drum reconditioning facility in the southern portion of the property. The new hard wash area is hard-piped and equipped with secondary containment. High pressure spraying has replaced chaining. The sumps in the former hard wash area are no longer in use.

At least eight soil sampling events have been conducted at the site since 1987. In April 1987, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services was notified by Tweedy Elementary School staff that an odorous seep had been noted in an area of exposed soil on the school's property, adjacent to the south wall of the Cooper Drum Company's reconditioning facility. Exploratory trenching indicated that the liquid was emanating from cracks and hollow pipe openings in the concrete floor in the area of the flusher tanks. Analytical results from a subsequent soil sampling event indicated that volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were present at elevated concentrations along the property line between Cooper Drum and Tweedy Elementary School. Analytical results from soil sampling events conducted in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1998, and a soil gas sampling event in 1999, indicate that VOCs are also present at elevated concentrations in soils beneath the concrete floor of the reconditioning facility, proximal to the holding tanks and clarifiers, in the former hard wash area, and in other areas of the site.

Analytical results from 1996 and 1998 monitoring well ground water sampling events and a 1998 Hydropunch(TM) ground water sampling event indicate the presence of VOCs at concentrations significantly above background levels in the two uppermost aquifers (Bellflower and Exposition aquifers) beneath and hydraulically downgradient of the former hard wash area. The Bellflower, Exposition, and Gage aquifers are interconnected within 2 miles of the Cooper Drum Company site. Eleven municipal drinking water wells, which draw from the Exposition and Gage aquifers, are located within 4 miles of the site.

**Status (June 2001):** EPA is considering various alternatives for this 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) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.