

# EPA Plans Urgent Cleanup Project at Abandoned Plant

## Baycote Metal Finishing Site

Mishawaka, Indiana

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### For more information

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Beginning in late May, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency began removing dozens of leaky and corroded containers holding dangerous chemicals and secure the site of the abandoned Baycote Metal facility. The former electroplating business is located in an industrial park at 1302 Industrial Drive, Mishawaka. The project will cost taxpayers nearly \$2 million, but EPA is pursuing reimbursement from the party liable for the pollution.

In EPA terms, the cleanup is called a “time-critical removal action” because the contamination in the company building poses an imminent health threat to other people working in the industrial park and nearby residents as well as the environment. The Agency is conducting the removal under the emergency authority provided in federal law.<sup>1</sup> Cleanup began May 29 and will last around six months.

### Background

Baycote Metal Finishing electroplated and anodized steel and steel casing with zinc, cadmium and chromium for the automotive, recreational vehicle and trailer industries. The business began operations at the Mishawaka location in 1982 when it notified the Indiana Department of Environmental Management it was a hazardous waste generator. That classification was later modified to large quantity generator. The company changed ownership to TJAC LLC in 2003. The facility closed in January 2008, but more than 110,000 gallons of waste remained on-site. An IDEM inspection in July 2008 documented numerous violations of chemical handling and storage codes. The state and responsible party reached a legal



*Corroded, leaking vats like these are just a few of the dangerous problems discovered inside the former Baycote Metal facility in Mishawaka. EPA plans to start a six-month cleanup project at the end of May.*

<sup>1</sup>EPA conducts emergency cleanups under the authority of Section 104(a)(1) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA better known as the Superfund law) and 42 USC 9604(a)(1).

agreement in 2009 where TJAC was supposed to remove and dispose of all waste material. However, work ceased and in February 2010, approximately 50,000 gallons of waste remained on-site.

The St. Joseph County Health Department got involved last November when it responded to complaints of hazardous chemicals at the location. After an inspection revealed serious problems, the county health department asked EPA for assistance.

### **EPA site inspection**

Inspections conducted by EPA responders last November and December found numerous tanks, drums and containers holding or leaking toxic, flammable and corrosive substances such as cyanide and hydrochloric acid. The 62,500-square-foot facility is in disrepair with a portion of the roof collapsed and one room flooded with water. Containers were not organized or secured and labeled in a way to prevent spillage, intermingling and release.

Inspectors determined the site poses a serious hazard because it is surrounded by working businesses, is only 700 feet from homes and less than a mile from the St. Joseph River, which drains into Lake Michigan.

EPA issued a legal order to the property owner this April directing them to clean up the site, but that party disputes their responsibility. The site is so hazardous, however, that EPA officials decided to conduct a cleanup now and seek legal remedies and repayment later.

### **Cleanup plan**

Removal activities at the Baycote property will include:

- Develop and implement a site-specific health and safety plan for residents and workers, including an air monitoring plan and emergency contingency preparations.
- Inventory and categorize all substances in vats, pits, drums and other containers.
- Sample and analyze contents to determine disposal options.
- Consolidate and package material for transport and off-site disposal.
- Dismantle and decontaminate process equipment.
- Transport and dispose of all hazardous substances in an approved off-site disposal facility.



*This open barrel containing liquid waste was typical of the dozens of vats, drums and containers found abandoned in the former Baycote Metal building in Mishawaka, Indiana. EPA inspectors determined the site posed an imminent health threat to people in neighboring businesses and homes, and the Agency will conduct an emergency cleanup project starting this spring.*