



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
REEF Environmental Facility
Update on Community Activities
Sylacauga, Talladega County, Alabama

Number 3

November 2012

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Reef LLC facility located at 71 Twin Street, Sylacauga, Alabama was a centralized industrial waste water treatment facility. The facility was permitted to accept waste water and oily waste from other industries for treatment and discharge to a public operated treatment works (POTW) in Sylacauga. Shortly after the first waste deliveries began, local and state government officials received numerous odor complaints. Subsequent assessments identified unstable conditions relating of accumulating gases (organic and hydrogen sulfide) under a tarp/liner over the Biological Treatment Basin at the facility and an oily sheen being released from the facility as well as abandoned hazardous chemicals both on the facility grounds and in the onsite facility lab.

RESPONSE ACTIONS TO DATE

On October 1, 2012, Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) requested assistance from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Region 4 to investigate an oily sheen on Shirtee Creek next to the Site. Further investigation lead to the discovery of the tarp that was stressed and under pressure over the two equalization basins. An EPA On-Scene-Coordinator (OSC) was dispatched to the scene. A network of absorbent booms has been placed in and around Shirtee Creek to address the unpermitted surface discharges of oily wastewater from the facility. On-scene personnel continue to monitor and control the area seepage area around Shirtee Creek for adverse impacts to fish and other aquatic organisms. In addition, an air scrubber system was installed to alleviate the large bubble of gases underneath the tarp covering the wastewater basins. The scrubber system operated between October 5 and October 7, 2012 and removed approximately 170,000 cubic yards of gas from under the tarps. Over the past four weeks and since the end of EPA's emergency response actions in early October, EPA and its' technical contractors have established field offices on the REEF property and is working with engineers and technical consultants to devise a safe and cost effective control measure for the odor, as well as, eliminating the seepage to Shirtee Creek and disposal of the 13.5million gallons of waste water. The Emergency Rapid Response Service (ERRS) contractor has completed grubbing of the Site, which includes, brush clearing, as well as, grass cutting. Air monitoring is ongoing at established locations on Site and throughout the residential community to the southeast, areas that are down wind of the Site. The air monitoring operations are to ensure citizens are safe and are not being adversely impacted by the on-Site response activities. Data from the air monitoring in the neighborhoods has not identified any concentrations that present any health hazards. The materials in the basin were treated to greatly reduce the amount of fugitive gases until the source material can be removed during the next cleanup phase. However, there will be residual odor releases throughout this process until our efforts are completed.

DESCRIPTION OF THREAT

The abandoned facility has several priority issues that will be addressed under a phased approach. The emergency response action was primarily addressing the trapped gases that exist under the tarps/liners over the two 3 million gallon treatment basins. The trapped gases total approximately 175,000 cubic feet and evidence indicates elevated levels of organics and hydrogen sulfide. Once the gases have been removed the basin material will be treated to reduce gas production.

NEXT STEPS

EPA continues weekly real time air monitoring on Site and throughout the neighboring residential area to the southeast of the Site. EPA's Environmental Response Team will continue to collect weekly air samples. Details of this data will be released pending data validation and quality control review. During the next reporting period the OSC will brief the Superfund Division Director on a scope of work that will address the costs to treat the odor, as well as, treatment and disposal for the waste water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
Kerisa Coleman
(404) 562-8831 or (877) 718-3752
or by email to Coleman.Kerisa@epa.gov

EPA On-Scene Coordinator
David Andrews
(404) 562-8763
or by email to Andrews.David@epa.gov

www.epaosc.org/reefwaste