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EPA on site at Temple Stuart again

BY LIVIA GERSHON
NEWS STAFF WRITER

TEMPLETON — Contractors the Environmental Protection Agency hired are once again working to clean up contaminated land around the old Temple Stuart Factory.

Last year, EPA contractors excavated soil from the yards of 26 homes on Elm, Winchester, Holman, Harris, and Bridge streets that were contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs. In mid-March, the agency brought a new contractor to the area to continue filling, grading and reseeding the lawns that were torn up. They will also plant trees and shrubs to replace any that had to be cut down during the process.

According to EPA on-scene coordinator Mike Barry, the agency had hoped they would be able to finish the cleanup by this July. After sampling soil at the floor and edges of the areas they dug up, however, they determined that they will have to excavate more yards.

"There was a little bit of sort of mission creep," said Barry, who said the workers are also starting to decontaminate yards that they couldn't get permission to work on last year.

Barry said workers will start digging at 22 new yards on Tuesday, and he expects they will finish that part of the project by the end of July. He said he hopes to have all the lots refilled by the end of the summer.

"It looks like we're going to be here until August or September," he said.



News staff photo by LIVIA GERSHON

Workers repaired yards on Elm Street near the old Temple Stuart factory site Wednesday. The yards were dug up last year as part of the EPA's efforts to clean up PCB contamination in the area.

The Temple Stuart Factory, located at 5 Holman St., produced furniture from 1910 to 1993. The agency began its cleanup operation in 2002 on the factory site itself, demolishing

unstable buildings and removing asbestos. EPA officials have said that paint being burned in the building may have led to the

Cleanup also scheduled at Baldwinville Products site

BY LIVIA GERSHON
NEWS STAFF WRITER

TEMPLETON — As cleanup efforts around the old Temple Stuart factory continue, the EPA is poised to start cleaning up hazardous materials from the site of another closed Baldwinville factory. In late April or early May, the agency will start removing containers holding chemicals and oil from the Mill Street site of the closed Baldwinville Products Inc. paper mill.

"The building has hundreds of drums scattered throughout the facility in various stages of degradation," said Mike Nalipinski, the EPA on-scene coordinator for the project.

After disposing of the barrels, he said, the agency will begin removing asbestos that it has found in various portions of the site.

"We hope to get those two major tasks done by end of summer, early fall," Nalipinski said.

If the agency still has time and money available, he added, it will turn its attention to elevated levels of lead and arsenic that have been found in surface soil at the site.

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PCB contamination.

According to the EPA, PCBs have been shown to cause cancer and other health problems in animals and may affect people the same way. However, Barry said that the health risk to people in Baldwinville is probably not high.

"The levels here are really very low," he said, adding that workers on the site have not experienced skin irritation, something that people exposed to PCBs often encounter.

Kristine Ayers, who has lived at 84 Elm St. since 1988, is part of the second phase of the project, with her yard scheduled to be dug up this spring. She said she is worried about the possible health effects of the PCBs.

"I just had my thyroid taken out and I haven't had my results back, so cancer is definitely a concern," she said.

Across the street, Edward Turski, whose 85 Elm St. yard was excavated last year, said he doesn't think health problems from the PCBs are likely.

"I wasn't too worried about this situation either way because I don't think it's caused anything to this point," he said. "I think it's typical of the change in the environment where everything's being watched so closely."

Turski, whose father worked at Temple Stuart, and who works

in manufacturing himself, said the EPA has done a good job of reaching out to local residents.

"The contact has been very good with the people," he said. "We've certainly been satisfied with what they've done to this point."

Barry said that the local reaction to their work has been mostly positive.

"People seem to be glad that we're taking care of a potential health risk," he said. "Of course, nobody likes to have you come up and dig their yard. You can't minimize the impact on the neighborhood that we've had."

The funding for the project has come from the EPA's Superfund program, although the site is not included on the high-priority list that includes some of the most serious environmental problems in the country. So far, the EPA has spent more than \$2.5 million on the residential cleanup.

There will be an informational meeting to explain the cleanup, as well as another EPA project at the site of the old Baldwinville Products paper mill, around the end of April. The exact date has not been set yet.

lgershon@thegardnernews.com

Cleanup also scheduled at Baldwinville Products site

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The factory has been abandoned since the mid-1990s. Nalipinski said that agency began looking into it around 2003 and decided to focus on it after several fires broke out, including a four-alarm blaze on New Year's Day this year. He said the fires are a clear sign that people have been trespassing onto the dangerous site. If a fire hit the areas of the factory containing the barrels, he added, it could cause serious damage.

"They could explode if they were in a room that caught fire," he said. "If a fire starts in the building and you've got all that asbestos in there, the fire will cause the asbestos to be released."

That could be a danger for firefighters, as well as anyone else in the area, he said.

Like the Temple Stuart site cleanup, the new project gets its funding from the

*'They could explode if
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that caught fire.'*

— Mike Nalipinski

EPA's Superfund program but is not a priority cleanup site. An informational meeting on both projects will be held around the end of April.

The EPA is also reminding local residents not to trespass on the site because of the hazardous chemicals present and because the buildings are in a state of disrepair.

lgershon@thegardnernews.com