

B4

Worcester Telegram & Gazette Fri, 4/29/2005

Templeton factory cleanup may cost as much as \$7.2M

By Shirley Barnes
CORRESPONDENT

TEMPLETON—Cleanup of abandoned factories in town has turned into a larger project than anticipated. It could cost the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as much as \$7.2 million to eliminate asbestos and polychlorinated biphenyl from the former Temple Stuart factory and asbestos and chemicals at the former Baldwinville Products paper mill.

Residents got an update on the cleanups during a meeting with federal environmental officials Monday.

Workers began removing contaminated soil this month from residential property around the Temple Stuart site. The work could be completed by October.

Altogether, two teams of 10 to 15 workers will clean 27 yards, removing at least 4,100 cubic yards of soil, or 7,300 tons.

During the cleanup, eight technicians will see that about 1,500 soil samples are tested for PCBs.

Water tanks have been brought in to control dust and winter road sweepings as the crews have begun filling yards with fresh stockpiled loam and sand.

Mike Barry, Temple Stuart on-site coordinator for the EPA, said PCB-contaminated soil removed from lawns last year was shipped to a facility in Loudon, N.H. The soil is then treated by thermal desorption, a method of heating the soil to the point of cooking, but not burning. This drives the PCBs off as gas into a liquid form. Then they can be captured and disposed of safely.

The remaining soil is clean, but devoid of nutrients or organic matter, and is useful only as landfill cover.

The Baldwinville Products site work, supervised by Mike Nalipinski of the EPA, is beginning with site preparation and analysis of waste material in drums and tanks outside and inside the plant and

on the loading dock. Next month workers will begin removing asbestos. Drums and tank waste will be shipped off-site for disposal in June, and by fall, the remaining asbestos will be removed.

A fire on the loading dock on New Year's Day accelerated the cleanup at Baldwinville Products. The fire appeared to be connected to youths using the abandoned mill, where investigators found old couches, basketballs and other material pointing to prolonged use by youths.

On the loading dock where the fire started, there were several drums containing unknown material. Had the fire not been contained, those tanks, or any of the 100 to 200 other drums in the three or four floors of the larger section of the paper mill, could have exploded, spreading the fire and blowing asbestos from inside the mill for miles, authorities said. The chemicals in the drums and tanks could have created an additional disaster.

Mr. Barry said he was scheduled to clear asbestos and the drums from Baldwinville Products later, but after the fire he requested help to speed up the process.

The U.S. Coast Guard Strike Force will oversee the removal of chemicals and analysis of materials in the tanks and drums.

Most of the materials discovered at the Baldwinville Products mill have been consistent with chemicals normally used in processing paper, including those in a small lab on-site, probably used to test paper material quality.

The members of the Coast Guard strike force will oversee evaluation and removal of material in the drums. One clarifier tank was found to be empty. Another tank, which formerly held sulfuric acid, now contains only a foot or two of dried sediment. Some of the drums investigated contained xylene and some contained motor oil, used for maintenance of paper-making

equipment.

Mr. Nalipinski said the most important effort is to prevent any fire from happening because of materials in the plant. The asbestos in the plant is mostly wrapped around pipes inside the mill, but some was outside the building and some in the basement.

The first effort will be to secure the 110-acre mill property. A set of steps and a walkway leading from the town sewage treatment plant into the mill site has been removed. Mr. Nalipinski and members of the task force will meet with the local police and fire departments to coordinate these efforts. There will also be security on site at all times.

When the project is finished, all chemicals in drums will be removed, tanks will be emptied and cleaned, and all friable asbestos will be removed from the mill, Mr. Nalipinski said.

No more buildings are scheduled for removal, he said, but by this fall, when the project is finished, the plant should be clean. He told residents of the area that tests taken around the plant did not indicate any need for soil removal.

Residents of Mill Street, Davis Street and Highland Avenue asked whether they should be concerned about what might be in soil at their homes. One couple remembered that 15 years ago, when large piles of paper for recycling stored outside the plant burned, the Fire Department ordered them to vacate their homes. These residents expressed concern about what blew onto their yards from that fire.

There will be either a newsletter or another meeting as work in both sites progresses through the summer, officials said.

Residents at the meeting were given names and phone numbers for the on-scene coordinators and for Angela Bonarrigo, community relations coordinator.