

Identifying and Characterizing Drums and Containers

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is overseeing the sampling and removal of over 400 drums and 1000 small containers found at the former Compounders, Inc. site in Howell Township, New Jersey.

EPA and its contractors are opening, identifying, and then characterizing the contents of each container and drum at the site to ensure that they are properly handled before they are removed. EPA is labeling and staging the drums of chemicals for testing and disposal. If a drum or container does not meet the Department of Transportation's standards to allow for shipping off-site, EPA will move its contents to a new, suitable container. The drums and containers are staged on a plastic-lined containment area to prevent spills or leaks while disposal is coordinated. EPA will continue its work until all the materials at the site have been assessed and secured to be taken away, which is expected to take approximately 6 to 8 months.



EPA is coordinating with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) to investigate the site and evaluate the soil and groundwater conditions after the drums are removed.

EPA is monitoring the air for particulate matter and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). At this time, EPA has not had any alarms exceeding EPA's harmful levels. On site, EPA has also placed a water tank to provide dust suppression activities if monitors indicate elevated levels. If VOCs are detected, EPA will identify what the source is and mitigate it. If EPA determines throughout the cleanup that these sensors are not capable of monitoring for a substance discovered on site, EPA will adjust the air monitoring plan as necessary.



Contaminants

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are organic chemical compounds that can easily evaporate in air and commonly used in industries as solvents to remove oils and grease. For more information about VOCs, please visit www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/technical-overview-volatile-organic-compounds.

Particulate Matter (PM) is a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets found in the air. Some particles, such as dust, dirt, soot, or smoke, are large or dark enough to be seen with the naked eye while others are very small. Most particles form as a result of complex reactions of chemicals. For more information about PM, please visit www.epa.gov/pm-pollution.

Howell Township Evacuation Plan

Howell Township developed an evacuation plan as a precaution and as a proactive measure in the event of a subsequent fire or other incident at the property. EPA has established and maintained 24/7 site security since February and the property owner established a fence around the area of concern in March. Through these

measures, we have ensured that no further trespassing or vandalism has occurred at the property. At this time, EPA and Howell Township do not believe there is a need for evacuations. For more questions regarding the evacuation plan, please reach out to Howell Township Office of Emergency Management at (732) 938-4500 or you can sign up to receive emergency alerts from Howell Township at <https://member.everbridge.net/892807736721692/login>.

Initial Response

On February 9, 2023, Howell Township Fire Departments were dispatched to the former Compounders Inc site, where they discovered materials burning inside an old metal structure on site. Firefighters found numerous drums and smelled a chemical odor. After extinguishing the fire, firefighters called the Howell Township Office of Emergency Response (HTOER) who called in the Monmouth County Department of Health (MCDOH) to address potential hazardous materials. MCDOH discovered large quantities of 55-gallon drums, along with smaller quantities of other containers around the site. MCDOH and HTOER also found spilled materials on the ground and open drums, as well as solid waste.

NJDEP's Bureau of Emergency Response assessed the site after a request from MCDOH and found hundreds of 55-gallon drums and thousands of containers, many of which were either bulging, rusting, denting, or leaking.

NJDEP requested EPA's assistance on February 15, 2023. EPA found there were breaches in the front fence of the property and no fence securing any other side of the property. EPA observed containers that were leaking and labeled as hazardous materials.

Shortly after being asked to address the site, EPA provided 24-hour security and requested that the property owner fence in the area of concern. EPA began cleanup actions at the site right after it obtained access from the site owner in early April.

Drinking Water

As a part of the initial response activities, EPA worked with the NJDEP and MCDOH to determine if there are any drinking water wells in the area. All nearby residences are hooked up to city water provided by the Borough of Farmingdale. Farmingdale has shared their regularly scheduled sampling results with EPA and confirmed that there is no impact to their drinking water supply. According to NJDEP, the thick layer of marl (tight, fine-grained clay) in the ground acts as a confining layer protecting the deep drinking water wells in the area.

Site Background

The site is located at 15 Marl Road in Howell Township, NJ and is the former location of Compounders Inc., a facility that manufactured a number of chemical compounds, including glues, adhesives, and asphalt materials. Compounders Inc. operated until 2019. The current owner purchased the business as part of a stock sale in 2021.

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