



U. S. Environmental Protection Agency

FACT SHEET

Mills Gap (former CTS Plant) Site

Asheville, North Carolina

No. 3

September 2008

This fact sheet summarizes the activities presently underway at the Site, and future activities planned for the Site.

Additional information is available at:
www.epaossc.net/MillsGap

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Vapor Sampling Results

In January 2008, EPA examined the potential for vapor exposure near the site. The study included real time measurement of trichloroethene (TCE) and tetrachloroethene (PCE) in ambient (outdoor) air with EPA's Trace Analytic Gas Analyzer (TAGA) bus. In addition, 18 soil gas measurements, 10 passive air samplers, and 10 sub-slab measurements in crawl spaces of homes were conducted. Low levels of TCE vapors were detected in some crawl spaces of homes, but all of the measured values of TCE vapors were within an acceptable, health-based, risk range currently being used by EPA. There was one outdoor ambient air sample that had contaminants above the EPA risk range. That air sample was taken near a spring that is fenced (limiting access) and posted.

Although other ambient air values were within the acceptable risk range, citizens residing near the plant raised concerns that TCE was detected in air. In particular, one instantaneous sample taken near a school bus stop (Surrey Run) was higher than most of the other samples. The initial study presented some data gaps, most notably 24-hour ambient samples in the neighborhood. Also, elevated values in one home, located near the spring, warranted further sampling.

In August 2008, EPA took additional 24-hour passive air samples to complement the January data. The values were generally lower than the original study. Ambient air values vary significantly with meteorological conditions, so it is not surprising to find that the values had changed. Two samples near the bus stop near Surrey Run measured non-detect for TCE and a sample near another bus stop on Concord Road measured levels below EPA's risk range for TCE.

Pilot Scale Testing Planned for Springs

In the last few weeks, CTS and EPA reached an agreement to test a system that would inject ozone underground to the spring mentioned above. The work is being conducted under the terms of the 2002 Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) between EPA, CTS, and Mills Gap Road Associates (MGRA). Ozone, a powerful oxidant, destroys TCE. The objective of the study is to determine if ozonation would be effective for the spring given the localized conditions. The pilot scale testing is scheduled for this fall and winter. Full-scale implementation would follow if the system successfully reduces TCE values in the springs.

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EPA believes that the TCE vapors emanate from surface waters that originate at contaminated springs. This hypothesis is based largely on the absence of TCE from 9 of the 10 sub-slab measurements, but presence of TCE in above ground samples. It is possible that ozonation at the contaminated springs would alleviate the ambient TCE vapor levels as well as surface water.

Groundwater Investigation Underway with NCDENR

On November 27, 2007, NCDENR Division of Waste Management issued a letter to CTS Corporation requesting that CTS provide a "site assessment to facilitate the transition in lead regulatory agency and to expedite complete remediation of the contamination." CTS, under the oversight of the NCDENR Inactive Hazardous Sites Branch, recently began the investigation with installation of the first set of groundwater monitoring wells. NCDENR is the lead agency for groundwater. For more information on NCDENR activities, please contact Bruce Parris of the Inactive Hazardous Sites Branch. His contact information is given on the front page.

Additional Residential Well Sampling

EPA's Site Evaluation Section determines if a site is eligible for placement on the National Priorities List (NPL). Each site is reevaluated as new data becomes available. As part of this process, additional residential well sampling is currently underway. In addition to protection of public health, the additional sampling, when combined with the December 2007 well sampling, will be used to evaluate seasonal fluctuations (if any) in contaminant levels.

Spring Sampling Expanded

Ten additional springs near the former CTS plant were sampled by NCDENR in April 2008 through a cooperative agreement with EPA. One spring, just east of the plant, at the fence line, was contaminated measured 330 ppb TCE. That spring feeds the stream that runs east along Mills Gap Road, a stream that had already measured elevated TCE values in previous sampling in 2007. The other nine samples were non-detect for TCE and other volatile organic compounds. A summary report of surface water sampling is underway, and will be posted on the www.epaossc.net/MillsGap website.

Health Consultation

The CTS Health Assessment, which is being authored by John Masters at the NC DHHS Epidemiology Branch, is still the development phase at this time. Completion of the draft is expected in late October. If there are any questions regarding the CTS health assessment or health related questions regarding the contaminants from the CTS site please contact John Masters by phone or email (see contact information on the front page).

Site History

CTS Corporation purchased the facility from International Resistance Corporation and manufactured electronic components on the site from 1959 to 1985. The original 54-acre property was sold to Mills Gap Associates (MGRA) and redeveloped, leaving a fenced 9-acre site where manufacturing occurred.

In 2002, EPA, CTS, and MGRA entered into an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) to conduct a Time-Critical Removal Action at the site. The AOC requires the "Respondents" (i.e., CTS and MGRA) to mitigate contamination in the "unsaturated zone" (the area that rests above the portion of the aquifer saturated with groundwater). Contaminants detected in this zone include TCE, trichloroethane (TCA), and petroleum hydrocarbons. In response to that requirement, CTS constructed a Soil Vapor Extraction (SVE) system on site. SVE is essentially a vacuum applied to the subsurface with multiple extraction wells in order to collect volatile organic compounds. The system was completed in July of 2006, and, to date, over 3,600 pounds of contaminants have been removed.