

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region II
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Tuesday, February 24, 2009
From: Paul L. Kahn, Michael Hoppe

To: Andrew Raddant, Department of Interior Lisa Levy, OSHA
William Molnar, Sandy Alexander Albert Greco, City of Clifton
Denise Zeno, USEPA Angela Carpenter, USEPA

Subject: SPECIAL #10: Suspected Shock-Sensitive Peroxide Incident Resolved
Abrachem Chemical
2 Peekay Drive, Clifton, NJ
Latitude: 40.8306000
Longitude: -74.1231000

POLREP No.:	22	Site #:	A212
Reporting Period:		D.O. #:	072
Start Date:	1/2/2009	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	12/30/2008	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:	NJR000031831	Contract #	EP-W-04-055
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

At 1615 hours on 10/29/08 EPA received a notification from the NRC that a chemical release was occurring at Abrachem Chemical, a bulk chemical packaging facility that leased a building in Clifton, Passaic County, NJ. The NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection was on-scene and requested EPAs presence.

At 1730 hours OSC Ellen Banner and OSC Paul Kahn responded to the scene. The company was found to be storing drums and bulk containers of known and unknown chemicals in 17 56-foot long intermodal shipping carriers (ISCs), stacked 3 tiers high (approx. 35 feet). Only 5 of the ISCs could be opened, and inside those it was observed that drums and bulk containers were staged behind tiers of empty poly drums, giving the impression that the ISCs were used for new drum storage. EPA observed that in the one ISC where the release originated at least one drum was leaking its contents onto a wooden pallet; strong chemical odors emanated from the open door of the ISC and were also pervasive in the general area.

The Operator of Abrachem retained the services of a remediation company, and contractor personnel were advised to lay poly sheeting and begin removing and overpacking the leaking and unknown drums that were readily accessible. Work commenced almost immediately, but at 2100 hours was halted due to lack of adequate lighting and inability to physically access the majority of the drums through the narrow doorway.

The Operator of Abrachem and the Owner of the property was issued a Field Expedient Notice, and in response the Operator stated he would initiate a removal action. When his efforts to respond to the release, and threats of a release, proved to be inadequate EPA sought voluntary access to initiate a response action. This access was denied on two occasions. On 12/4/2008 EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) for access. The Operator refused to comply with the UAO and EPA referred the matter to the Department of Justice for a legal remedy. On 1/8/2009 a federal Magistrate issued an access warrant to EPA to initiate a response action at the Site.

Current Activities

The 7 drums of that were suspected of being a shock-sensitive peroxide former were addressed on 2/23/2009. A vast array of state, local, and federal agencies, and in particular the Clifton Fire Department

(Incident Commander), had preplanned a response strategy to be implemented when the drums were to be opened on 2/23. Prior to the drum opening the CFD deployed it's mobile command post, 10 pieces of fire apparatus, 30 firefighters, and foam tankers from the Passaic County Fire OEM. ERT deployed a portable meteorological station to provide real-time met data, such as wind speed and direction. EPA-PAD provided three people for Community Involvement, Press Relations, and Intergovernmental Relations.

A hi-hazard response team with Clean Harbors (Baltimore, MD) arrived on Site at 0900 hours and set up a remote drum opener apparatus. Each suspect drum was remotely opened and pH paper was used to test for acidity. At very low pH peroxides won't form, and the test strips employed by Clean Harbors indicated very low pH, possibly 0. Clean Harbors then used peroxide test strips which showed negative, so the presumption was that the crystals on the drums were not peroxides. Clean Harbors opined that the drums probably had contained a strong organic acid. After conferring with the Clifton FD and SEMO personnel, it was decided that the drums did not present an imminent danger of deflagration and emergency response equipment and personnel were told to stand-down. A de-briefing meeting was convened at the Site and by 1600 hours all personnel had departed the scene.

Agencies involved in the response included: Clifton FD, City of Clifton OEM, Clifton City Council, Passaic County Sheriff's Department, NJDEP, NJ Div. of Fire Safety, NJ Attorney General, NJ-DHS, EPA-ERT, EPA-PAD, EPA CID, Passaic County OEM, Town of Lyndhurst (Bergen County), fire departments from Wayne, Totowa, Little Falls, West Paterson, Hawthorne, Passaic, and Nutley.

Planned Removal Actions

Tuesday, February 23rd will be used to restore the Site to it's state prior to the incident occurring on 2/20. ERRS will break-down the sandbag berms and stockpile the bags for possible future use. ERRS will restage drums for sampling and haz-cating activities, which will resume on Wednesday, 2/24.

Next Steps

Re-organize Site and resume normal removal activities.

Key Issues

See previous POLREP.

response.epa.gov/abrachemchemical