

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region V
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2009

From: Tricia Edwards

To: Tricia Edwards, SFD

Subject: Initial and Final POLREP

Detroit Mystery Drums

4461 West Jefferson, Detroit, MI

Latitude: 42.3064000

Longitude: -83.0867000

POLREP No.:	1	Site #:	B5RJ
Reporting Period:	3/23/09 to 3/24/09	D.O. #:	
Start Date:	3/24/2009	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	3/23/2009	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:	3/24/2009	NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:	3/24/2009	Incident Category:	
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

On March 23, 2009, the National Response Center (NRC) received an anonymous call stating that there were six leaking drums containing sodium cyanide inside an abandoned warehouse in Detroit (NRC Report #900730). U.S. EPA and the Detroit Fire Department Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Team responded. The abandoned warehouse was a 10-story building covering several blocks. No floor plan was available, and there was no power or lighting inside the structure. The building was in deteriorated condition, and had been subject to a fire recently. A recon around the exterior of the building did not indicate any signs of chemical spills or releases. Due to the unsafe conditions, all parties agreed to conduct a full recon of the interior the following morning. The Detroit Police Department secured the property overnight.

Current Activities

US EPA, Weston START contractors and the Detroit Fire Department Hazardous Materials Team mobilized to the site the morning of March 24, 2009. Representatives from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the City of Detroit Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) also responded to the site. The Detroit Police Department provided on-site security for the response actions.

US EPA and the START contractors conducted a floor by floor sweep of all ten stories of the abandoned warehouse. The Detroit Fire Department Hazardous Materials Team provided stand-by rescue support for the entry team.

The entry team conducted real-time air monitoring for volatile organic compounds, percent oxygen, percent lower explosive limit (LEL), hydrogen sulfide (H₂S), carbon monoxide (CO), and hydrogen cyanide. No readings were detected above background on any instrument in any part of the building.

A total of approximately 20 drums, two compressed gas cylinders, and one small propane tank were present scattered throughout the building. A large portion of the drums appeared to be full of debris. Several (including one with a corrosive label) were empty.

The only cluster of drums was located on the first floor. Approximately seven drums were located in a room on the south side of the first floor. Several of the drums appeared to be oil drums, and several others appeared to be janitorial cleaning product containers.

No drums were located inside the warehouse with sodium cyanide or poisonous labels as reported to the NRC. No drums were placarded with hazardous waste labels, with the exception of the one empty drum with a corrosive label. No drums appeared to be leaking.

The entry team did observe the presence of a large amount of pipe wrap (both intact and disturbed) throughout a large portion of the building. The disturbed wrap appears to have been removed from pipes during metal scrapping activities. There is the potential for some of this material to contain asbestos.

Planned Removal Actions

There were no sodium cyanide or poison drums located in the abandoned warehouse. There was no indication of any hazardous waste drums inside the warehouse.

Prior to demobilization, US EPA briefed all parties on the contents of the building.

The survey of the building did not indicate the presence of any containers that would pose an imminent and substantial threat to human health or the environment.

Next Steps

No further US EPA actions are anticipated at this time.

Key Issues

The abandoned warehouse is currently owned by the Detroit Port Development Corporation. A representative of the corporation provided verbal and written access (via email) to MDEQ and US EPA prior to the initiation of the recon events.

response.epa.gov/DetroitMysteryDrums