

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region II
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Thursday, May 7, 2009
From: Paul L. Kahn, Michael Hoppe

To:	Paul Kahn, ERRD-RPB	Tim Grier, USEPA Headquarters 5202G
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Subject: SPECIAL #13: Sampling of Nitrocellulose Drum
Abrachem Chemical
2 Peekay Drive, Clifton, NJ
Latitude: 40.8306000
Longitude: -74.1231000

POLREP No.:	34	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 EPA's 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

On 5/7/2009 reps from Clean Harbors High-hazard group (Baltimore, MD) were on Site to open and hydrate two drums of nitrocellulose that was thought to have become dehydrated. Nitrocellulose with less than 25% moisture (either solvent or water) is considered to be spontaneously combustible and could deflagrate. One drum was believed to have some moisture inside and was opened by hand, while the second drum was opened using a robotic device operated by the Passaic County Bomb Squad.

The event was supported by the Clifton Fire Department which deployed two fire trucks and firemen who stood-by with uncharged hose lines. EMTs and an ambulance from the Passaic County Sheriff's Department was also on-scene.

The drums were opened and hydrated with water and isopropyl alcohol, and rendered safe for transportation for disposal.

The entire event was video taped and was viewable on the Internet as a streaming video.

Planned Removal Actions

The stabilized nitrocellulose will be moved into the drum staging area inside the premises. Arrangement for the T & D of this material to Louisiana is underway and at no cost to the government.

Next Steps

Await word from the manufacturer that disposal arrangement are complete and set a pick up date.

Key Issues

None.

Estimated Costs *

	Budgeted	Total To Date	Remaining	% Remaining
Extramural Costs				
ERRS - Cleanup Contractor	\$970,000.00	\$768,000.00	\$202,000.00	20.82%
RST/START	\$0.00	\$26,000.00	(\$26,000.00)	0.00%
Intramural Costs				
Total Site Costs	\$970,000.00	\$794,000.00	\$176,000.00	18.14%

* The above accounting of expenditures is an estimate based on figures known to the OSC at the time this report was written. The OSC does not necessarily receive specific figures on final payments made to any contractor(s). Other financial data which the OSC must rely upon may not be entirely up-to-date. The cost accounting provided in this report does not necessarily represent an exact monetary figure which the government may include in any claim for cost recovery.

response.epa.gov/abrachemchemical

POLREP #34 Last Updated 5/8/2009