

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region II
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2009

From: Cris Donofrio, Paul Kahn

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Subject: Heller Heat Treating
5 Wellington Avenue, Clifton, NJ
Latitude: 40.8842000
Longitude: -74.1450000

POLREP No.:	2	Site #:	A213
Reporting Period:	4/24/09 - 5/20/09	D.O. #:	0076
Start Date:	4/24/2009	Response Authority:	CERCLA/OPA
Mob Date:	4/27/2009	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:	NJD002142412	Contract #	EP-W-04-055
RCRIS ID #:		Reimbursable Account #	
FPN#			

Site Description

The Alfred Heller Heat Treating Site is located at 5 Wellington Street, Clifton, Passaic County, New Jersey. The Alfred Heller Heat Treating Company (the Company) was founded in 1933, and originally operated in Manhattan, NY, to provide heat treating services to the metalworking industry in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. The Company was relocated in 1962 to its present location in Clifton, NJ. The facility is approximately 4 acres in size and contains six contiguous buildings. The facility is located in a densely populated, mixed residential and light industrial area of Clifton. There are four schools located within less than a 0.5 mile radius of the site. The Passaic River is less than ¾ miles to the east of the site.

The Company performed heat treating and metal finishing services to various industrial customers including the aircraft and ordinance business sectors. Initially, the Company specialized in heat treating operations that included potassium chloride salt pot work and oil quench production work. Austempering using sodium nitrite/nitrate quenching was initiated in 1968. Zinc plating operations began in the 1970s.

The Company entered into Chapter 7 bankruptcy in January 2009. Representatives from the Clifton Fire Department ("CFD") requested the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to accompany them on an inspection of facility in early March, 2009, because of their suspicion that hazardous materials were stored inside the premises. That inspection included representatives of the CFD, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the EPA.

The following chemicals and hazardous materials were estimated to be present at the Site at the time of the initial inspection:

- Approximately 30,000 gals of used quench oil stored in totes in various buildings.
- Additional oil contained in below-grade reservoirs for heat treating furnaces at various locations around the Site.
- One 30-cubic yard roll-off of zinc oxide sludge staged in a parking lot;
- Approximately 60 drums of zinc oxide sludge;
- Approximately 60 new product drums of sodium nitrite/nitrate oxidizer, and 40 drums of sodium nitrite/nitrate sludge;
- Approximately 400 drums of various chemicals, including solvents, acids, caustics, paint, oxidizers and unknown chemicals;
- Two zinc electroplating lines that contain plating chemical residue and sumps that contain hundreds of gallons of unknown chemicals;

- Approximately 50 fiber drums of elemental zinc balls
- Partially full ammonia and natural gas tanks;
- Two below-grade process tanks that contain a total of 170 tons of molten sodium nitrite/nitrate mixture;
- Open-top metal treatment tanks containing liquid and solidified sodium hydroxide.

The Asst. Director of the NJDEP Site Remediation Program referred the Site to EPA for a Superfund removal action on March 16, 2009. The Region 2 Emergency Response and Remedial Division Director verbally authorized the use of CERCLA funds to initiate a time critical removal action on April 22, 2009.

Current Activities

The Bankruptcy Trustee held an auction on 4/30/2009. EPA/ERRS was mobilized to the site on 4/27/2009 prior to the auction to begin site stabilization activities; no intrusive work will be conducted until auction activities are completed.

The USCG Atlantic Strike Team (AST) was mobilized on 4/28/2009 to provide air monitoring and assist with an initial assessment of the site prior to the auction being conducted. The purpose of the air monitoring was to insure that there were no immediate threats in the breathing air. The purpose of the assessment was to insure that there were no leaking drums or physical hazards that would pose an immediate threat to auction participants.

Open containers were closed and/or covered with plastic as feasible to reduce the potential for vapor emissions. Areas of concern were caution taped off as feasible and identified to the Trustee and auctioneer. EPA recommended that no one be allowed to enter these areas and explained that the air monitoring being conducted was only a screening technique; was not comprehensive; and that EPA was not certifying buildings as safe to enter.

EPA opened all available exits and had the site owner turn on the ventilation system in some of the buildings in order to aerate the facility. The USCG AST and the Regional Support Team Contractor contractor provided continuous air monitoring during the auction.

Currently, the Trustee is allowing purchasers of equipment to enter the buildings to claim their purchases. The auctioneer company is controlling access. EPA is clearing chemical containers from areas as needed to allow access to purchased equipment in order to reduce the potential for accidental release. EPA is also restaging drums for safe storage until sampling and T&D related activities are initiated. No intrusive work is being conducted until the auction process is complete. EPA/ERRS continue to open available exits as needed to enhance ventilation of the buildings.

EPA has been conducting an inventory of chemicals in the two laboratories on the facility. Two containers of picric acid, totalling approximately one pound or less, and one picric acid/methanol mixture were discovered as a result of the inventory. The acid containers are dated 1992 and 1996, respectively, and the contents of both appeared to have dehydrated over time. All three containers had crystallized picric acid either inside or along the rim of the lid. The containers were safely stored in a locked storage area until proper disposal could be effected.

The New Jersey State Police (NJSP) Bomb Unit removed all three picric acid containers on May 19, 2009. The materials were successfully detonated at a bomb range identified by the NJSP in Kearney, NJ. EPA and NJSP representatives inspected the blast site after the detonation to insure that all of the picric acid was consumed during the detonation. No trace of the containers or their contents were found.

Suffern Plating Corp. of Lodi, NJ reclaimed 28 drums of DOT hazardous chemicals and 19 drums of non-DOT regulated products on May 18, 2009. The products will be used in their plating operations and were removed at no cost to EPA.

On May 15 and 16, 2009, Park Thermal International of Ontario, Canada, pumped the molten sodium nitrite/nitrate mixture from the salt furnaces. The material was sold at auction and will be resold as product by Park Thermal. The material was removed at no cost to EPA. The furnaces can now be shut down to minimize utility costs at the site.

Planned Removal Actions

Currently EPA plans to remove all chemical waste drums, containers and laboratory chemicals. Additionally, EPA will remove and dispose of wastes from all vats, tanks and equipment reservoirs. EPA will continue to work closely with the Bankruptcy Trustee to identify chemicals that may have value and can be sold or reclaimed.

Next Steps

EPA plans to begin intrusive activities as soon as auction activities (removal of equipment sold at auction) can be confined to areas that can be sealed off from EPA activities. It is anticipated that removal of wastes from sumps and container sampling activities for Transportaion and Disposal (T&D) will start the week of 5/26/09.

Key Issues

The property auction was held on 5/20/09 without success. The final fate of the property sale and the applicability of the NJ Industrial Site Recovery Act (ISRA) regulations is currently undetermined. Resolution of that issue may impact the overall scope of work under the current CERCLA removal action.

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