

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IV
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Monday, February 28, 2011

From: Gary Andrew

Subject: Initial

Huntsville Gas Company
426 Dallas Avenue NW, Huntsville, AL
Latitude: 34.7313370
Longitude: -86.5935230

POLREP No.:	2	Site #:	A4TG
Reporting Period:		D.O. #:	
Start Date:	2/25/2011	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	2/14/2011	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Assessment
CERCLIS ID #:	ALN00040707462	Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

A manufactured gas plant operated at the Huntsville Gas Company (HGC) site from 1856 to about 1948. The facility originally operated in 1856 as the Huntsville Gas Light Company, using rosin from coal to manufacture gas. In 1932, after several name changes, the facility became the Huntsville Gas company. It is not known whether a carbonization or gasification (or both) process was used at the plant. In 1946, HGC became part of the Alabama Gas Corporation (Alagasco) and the plant was abandoned as the city's distribution system switched from coal gas to propane air gas. Between 1940 and 1950, the City of Huntsville began redeveloping projects in the surrounding downtown area, removing several shanties and old antebellum homes from Dallas Avenue near the plant. The plant was disassembled between 1950 and 1970, though specific date(s) of disassembly and abandonment procedures are presently unknown; two tanks and the purifying house are still visible in a 1954 aerial photograph. In the 1970s, the Huntsville Housing Authority (HHA) constructed the Searcy Homes Development, a portion of which resides on property previously occupied by HGC.

The site is bordered on the west by an unnamed drainage ditch, which flows 200' to the southwest into Pinhook Creek. Directly across the drainage ditch is a Norfolk Southern railroad line, from which coal and other raw materials were allegedly supplied to the HGC facility. Infrastructure in the area surrounding the HGC site changed significantly between 1950 and 1970. The HGC plant was located at the intersection of Rison/Pollard Street and Spragins Street, but portions of both streets were removed prior to the construction of Searcy Homes and were replaced with Dallas Avenue and Monroe Street, which travel parallel to one-another and do not intersect. Property lines in the neighborhood were also redrawn so that the original parcel boundaries of the HGC facility no longer exist. A pre-1950 sanborn map superimposed over a post-1990 aerial image has shown that several current structures reside on the former HGC footprint: a 0.1 acre vegetable garden, a concrete basketball court, the Searcy Homes Office (426 Dallas Avenue NW), and 5 duplex buildings (424 A/B, 422 A/B, 420 A/B, 418 A/B, and 416 A/B on Dallas Avenue NW).

The Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) conducted a CERCLA Preliminary Assessment (PA) of the HGC site in February, 2003 and issued its findings to EPA in May, 2003. ADEM collected groundwater, surface water, sediment, and soil samples in September, 2004 and submitted its findings in a CERCLA Site Inspection (SI) in September, 2006 to EPA that received a low priority for further assessment. ADEM collected additional soil samples in February, 2007 and submitted a second SI in September, 2007 to EPA that received a higher priority for further assessment based on findings that high levels of Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) were found in a widespread area. The site was referred to EPA Emergency Response and Removal Branch (ERRB) in January, 2008. The site has been listed in the CERCLA Information System (CERCLIS) under identification number ALN00040707462.

Historical knowledge has shown that the following potential chemicals are often found at manufactured gas plant sites: arsenic, cadmium, cyanide, lead, mercury, benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene, naphthalene,

phenolic compounds, and PAHs. Analytical results for soil sample collected during the second SI indicated the presence of arsenic, chromium, mercury, cyanide, and 14 organic compounds above Alabama Risk Based Corrective Action (ARBCA) Preliminary Screening Value (PSV) for Direct Contact Exposure in Residential soils. The sample was a composite of 132 individual borings, collected at 0"-18" below ground surface (bgs), over 3 acres of the estimated HGC footprint. Concern was raised about the findings due to high levels of several constituents, particularly PAHs, being found in this particular composite sample which had a high probability for dilution.

A tenant list submitted by the HHA reported that 8 of the 10 residential units (2 units per building) located in the projected HGC footprint were occupied during April, 2008. It has been observed by EPA and ADEM that several children, ages 1-15, are often playing in the area; no data has been collected during the environmental investigation on the population and ages of the children in the neighborhood. A portion of the Searcy Homes Office building is utilized by a Boy Scout Troop. The vegetable garden is used and tended regularly by the Boy Scout Troop. The basketball court is used regularly by neighborhood children.

Current Activities

Mobilization and set up of the site began on February 14, 2011. Set up of the water treatment system has been completed and 9 dewatering sumps have been installed. The automated air monitoring system is now up and operational. Excavation of the "599" deep excavation is underway in the vicinity of the former coal shed. Pavements are being removed. Other surficial soil removal is underway. As of February 25, 2011 575 tons of soil mixed with asphalt have been transported to Republic Services - Morris Farms Landfill in Hillsboro, AL.

Planned Removal Actions

Completion of the "599" excavation and subsequent confirmatory sampling is expected towards the end of this week. The slide rail system will be moved to a location adjacent to building No. 424 in preparation to begin the multi-step process of excavating to the bottom of the former gas holders. Dewatering activities will begin in order to enable the digging adjacent to the buildings. Surficial excavations will continue across the Site.

response.epa.gov/HGC