

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IV
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Thursday, June 9, 2011

From: Gary Andrew

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

POLREP No.:	4	Site #:	A4TG
Reporting Period:		D.O. #:	
Start Date:	2/25/2011	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	2/14/2011	Response Type:	PRP Oversight
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
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.

Current Activities

The excavation and back-fill work has been completed at the Site. During the excavation of the large gas holder it was discovered that the walls of the holder were within 4.5 feet of building 422 and within 1 foot of building 424. A structural engineer was brought in to evaluate the situation and determined that the walls of the holder were not sound and could not bear the load of the surrounding structures if the excavation continued to the original determined depth. The work plan was modified, with concurrence from the State, to allow the large gas holder excavation to be limited to a depth of six feet below ground surface. Final landscaping issues are being addressed as well as some paving work on Dallas Avenue where the asphalt was damaged during removal activities.

During the removal, 798 truckloads (21,212.06 tons) of waste were transported to the Republic Services landfill in Hillsboro, AL. The on-site waste water treatment system processed and discharged 243,546 gallons of water to the municipal waste water treatment system. The contractor applied 9,600 gallons of foam for odor control.

Next Steps

The OSC and ERT are currently reviewing a soil vapor sampling plan involving three of the buildings on the property. These buildings are located in the vicinity of the large gas holder. The sampling is anticipated to take place in late June.

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