

**United States Environmental Protection Agency**  
**Region I**  
**POLLUTION REPORT**

**Date:** Friday, January 6, 2006

**From:** Leslie Sims

**Subject:** Initiation of Action

Whitman Cistern Site

401 South Street (Lots 1 and 2), Whitman, MA

Latitude: 42.0825000

Longitude: -70.9231000

|                          |              |                            |                |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| <b>POLREP No.:</b>       | 1            | <b>Site #:</b>             |                |
| <b>Reporting Period:</b> |              | <b>D.O. #:</b>             |                |
| <b>Start Date:</b>       | 12/8/2005    | <b>Response Authority:</b> | CERCLA         |
| <b>Mob Date:</b>         | 12/8/2005    | <b>Response Type:</b>      | Time-Critical  |
| <b>Demob Date:</b>       |              | <b>NPL Status:</b>         | Non NPL        |
| <b>Completion Date:</b>  |              | <b>Incident Category:</b>  | Removal Action |
| <b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>     | MAN000104188 | <b>Contract #</b>          |                |
| <b>RCRIS ID #:</b>       |              |                            |                |

#### Site Description

The Site is an empty lot located south of 401 South Avenue in Whitman, MA. The Site consists of approximately 19 acres roughly triangular in shape, and is designated by the Town of Whitman Tax Assessor's Office as Maps 6 and 7, Block 75, and Lots 1 and 2. The geographic coordinates of the site, as measured from its approximate center, are 42° 04' 57" N latitude and 70° 55' 23" W longitude. The Site consists of an open grassy area near South Avenue and wooded/wetland areas further southwest from the road. The Site is bordered to the west by railroad tracks, beyond which is the Shumatuscant River, and to the north by South Avenue and several businesses. An eastern tributary of the Shumatuscant River, known as Beech Hill Brook, generally defines the site boundary to the east and south, across from the Brook there are residences and businesses. Regal Food and Liquor Store abuts the site to the northwest. Access to the site can be obtained west of the store through the northwest section of the site. The northern portion of the site is an open graveled area.

#### Current Activities

On April 26, 2005, START completed a PA/SI at the Site and collected a total of 13 surface soil samples, 13 subsurface soil samples, five sludge samples (collected from the cistern) and 11 surface water samples (collected from a tributary Brook to the Shumatuscant River). The surface soil, subsurface soils and sludge samples were analyzed for VOC, SVOCs, pesticides/PCBs, and metals. The surface water samples were analyzed for SVOCs and metals. Seven piles of soil were present on-site during the April 2005 Site PA/SI. Four of these piles are indigenous to the site and are believed to have been created during past construction work at the site. Wooded areas located throughout Site are areas of wetland vegetation with channels leading to the Brook. A cistern is buried in a grass-covered mound at the southeast edge of the cleared area. Standing water, sludge and sediment material was observed in the cistern. Hazardous substances identified during the investigation include elevated PAHs and mercury.

Elevated levels of PAHs and mercury in surface soils and sludge pose a direct contact threat to nearby human populations. It has been reported that children from the neighborhood frequent the Site regularly and have been known to use it for dirt biking and other recreational activities. The parcel of land is located fifty feet from South Avenue and abuts a shopping complex consisting of a grocery store and liquor store. Nearby properties in the area include residences and businesses.

On December 8, 2005 EPA performed a Site walk with representatives from ERRS and START to discuss the removal action.

On January 6, 2006, a security fence was installed at the Site to restrict public access during current winter weather conditions. The fence will remain in place until weather conditions improve enough to begin removal activities. Removal activities are tentatively scheduled to begin during the Spring of 2006.

**Planned Removal Actions**

EPA will conduct this removal action as a fund-lead action. The proposed actions will protect public health, welfare, and the environment by removing the hazardous substances and contaminated surface soils and contaminated sludge from the Site.

**Next Steps**

Planned removal activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Conduct additional sampling to further characterize the extent of contamination; Provide site security; Excavate and dispose (offsite) contaminated soils and sludge at EPA-approved disposal facilities; Decommission cistern; Further assess and characterize buried underground storage tanks to determine if CERCLA hazard exists; Cap in-place contaminated soils (if any) which may remain at depth or which cannot otherwise be excavated; Backfill excavated areas with clean fill material; and Conduct site restoration activities.

**Key Issues**

Site work is postponed at the site until weather conditions improve.

On January 6, 2006, a security fence was installed around the Site to restrict public access until removal activities can begin (tentatively scheduled for the Spring of 2006).

[response.epa.gov/whitmancistern](http://response.epa.gov/whitmancistern)