

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

**Date:** Friday, February 10, 2006

**From:** Perry Gaughan

**Subject:** Synthron Chemical Fire  
305 Amherst Road, Morganton, NC  
Latitude: 35.7569000  
Longitude: -81.6600000

<b>POLREP No.:</b> 2	<b>Site #:</b> A4LD
<b>Reporting Period:</b> 2/5/2006 - 2/10/2006	<b>D.O. #:</b>
<b>Start Date:</b> 1/31/2006	<b>Response Authority:</b> CERCLA
<b>Mob Date:</b>	<b>Response Type:</b>
<b>Demob Date:</b>	<b>NPL Status:</b> Non NPL
<b>Completion Date:</b>	<b>Incident Category:</b> Removal Assessment
<b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>	<b>Contract #</b>
<b>RCRIS ID #:</b>	

**Site Description**

For Site description and background information, refer to previous POLREP.

**Current Activities**

The following activities occurred during the reporting period:

2/6/2006

Air monitoring of the perimeter of the site continued today while the PRP cleanup contractor CCI began to clear the north side of the plant and stage drums out of the way. Investigators also continued their investigation of the incident scene.

2/7/2006

START conducted an air-sampling event using the FID and obtained elevated readings around the tank farm area located in the north portion of the site. Readings ranged from 5.6 ppm to 25.4 ppm. This area is where some liquids had pooled. Later in the day, contractor CCI containerized those liquids. Investigations by local public safety and insurance companies continued throughout the day.

2/8/2006

Today consisted of another day of investigations by local public safety officials and other investigators. CCI continues to conduct entries to support the investigation. The transformers on the power poles in the exclusion zone were taking down and staged on site as well on this day. Entries were also made by CTEH using FID in areas surrounding the blast zone with no elevated readings.

2/9/2006

Investigations by local investigators and insurance investigator took place throughout the morning. This involved man lift operations over the explosion zone to try and capture how the explosion occurred. During the investigation, while crews were working to clear paths for site entry, a burst of flame was emitted from a pile of a white ash-like powder when it came in contact with water. A sample was gathered of the material and brought out for hazard categorization. Via hazacatting the substance was determined to be inert; the same situation that occurred in the hot zone could not be recreated. Under a controlled situation, fire crews went back into the hotzone to hit the spot where flames were emitted again with water with no reaction. The earlier incident was determined to be a hot spot left over from the earlier fire.

Also on this day a meeting was held at the Burke County EMS office with all entities that are conducting investigations into the cause of the explosion on January 31. The main purpose of the meeting was to get

everyone into an agreement on how to proceed with the investigation without slowing down the process. EPA attended the meeting to address any concerns with hazardous waste issues and to make sure that the investigation does not interfere with the mitigation of those hazards still present on site.

Finally on this day, results came back from the sampling that DENR conducted on Feb. 7. The results have been sent to START for analysis compared to drinking water MCLs.

2/10/06

Operations began on starting to remove some debris from the west side of the building in order to allow investigators to get closer to the blast zone.

#### **Planned Removal Actions**

Currently, investigations are still taking place. EPA will continue to monitor the scene and address any hazardous waste issues as they arise. Once the investigations are completed, the site will transition into the removal phase.

#### **Next Steps**

Operations at the site will be suspended for 2/11 and 2/12/2006 due to inclement winter weather expected over the weekend. CTEH will keep one person on site to conduct perimeter air monitoring and CCI will have crews on standby should an incident arise during this timeframe. All investigations will also be suspended until Monday, 2/13/2006.

#### **Key Issues**

- Winter weather is expected over the weekend causing a delay in site operations.
- Debris is still strewn all over the blast area making it difficult to identify hazards present underneath the rubble.

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