

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

**Date:** Thursday, March 1, 2007

**From:** Perry Gaughan

**Subject:** Final Polrep

Synthron Chemical Fire

305 Amherst Road, Morganton, NC

Latitude: 35.7569000

Longitude: -81.6600000

<b>POLREP No.:</b>	13	<b>Site #:</b>	A4LD
<b>Reporting Period:</b>		<b>D.O. #:</b>	
<b>Start Date:</b>	5/9/2006	<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA
<b>Mob Date:</b>	5/8/2006	<b>Response Type:</b>	Time-Critical
<b>Demob Date:</b>	1/25/2007	<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL
<b>Completion Date:</b>	1/31/2007	<b>Incident Category:</b>	Removal Action
<b>CERCLIS ID #:</b>	NCD982121790	<b>Contract #</b>	
<b>RCRIS ID #:</b>			

#### **Site Description**

On January 31, 2006, at approximately 11:30 am, a fire and explosion occurred at the Synthron, Inc., facility. The City of Morganton Department of Public Safety (Police, Fire and EMS) were the initial responders on Site. On January 31, 2006, the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), OSHA, EPA, ATF, FBI, and CSB, joined the initial responders to provide technical assistance with the cleanup and/or investigation. The fire raged on for a number of hours as the fire fighters tried to contain it. The effect of the explosion was felt in residences and buildings several hundred yards away from the Site. The cause of the fire and explosion is currently under investigation however, initial reports have indicated that the incident was caused when materials leaked from a process reactor.

#### **Planned Removal Actions**

Removal Actions at Synthron essentially consisted of two phases: first the demolition of the remaining structure and support structures of the facility following the explosion and fire, and the second phase consisted primarily of categorization, segregation and disposal of all unknown and hazardous materials on site.

EPA OSCs Jeff Crowley and Barbara Scott initiated the demolition phase in May 2006. The remaining structure was methodically demolished while monitoring for asbestos. Ten other reactors from the facility were removed and cut up for disposal. Secondary structures such as the tank farm, maintenance shed, two steam boilers were demolished for eventual disposal also. Throughout the removal action, EPA maintained a cooperative arrangement with Synthron to insure that any viable asset could be recovered for the company and any residual value of the asset could be returned to the company. This agreement resulted in several tanks from the tank farm being sold to a third party with the residual value of the tanks being applied to the clean up. At the end of the demolition phase, the OSC met with Morganton Public Safety officials and county officials on the eventual status of the site upon completion. All parties were agreeable to leaving the facilities concrete pad and foundation on site for possible future development.

The disposal phase of this project included on site categorization ("haz-cattng") of numerous drums, tanks and totes on site and segregation into compatible waste streams. All raw material products which were deemed to be new raw material or unopened drums were set aside for those representative companies for eventual disposal or possible reuse. In this manner, EPA was able to dispose of 160 drums of raw material at little to no cost to the project.

The US Coast Guard Gulf Strike Team provided EPA with air monitoring and health and safety oversight during all phases of this removal action. EPA START contractors (Tetra Tech) provided EPA with sampling support, air monitoring support, asbestos fiber sampling and haz cattng of numerous unknowns, drums and totes on site. In addition, START completed a wind rows study and residential soil sampling of the neighboring properties to insure that no volatile chemicals migrated off-site during the explosion, fire and smoke plume.

## Disposition of Wastes

Waste Stream	Quantity	Manifest #	Disposal Facility
Reactor Waste, flammable liquid with polymer	1400 gal		
Organic Peroxide	508 lbs		
Tank Farm Waste, liquid	17770 gal		
Bulk Flammable Liquids	3315 gals		
Bulk Caustic Liquids	2510 gal		
Drummed caustic waste, non pumpable	79 drums		
Misc drummed waste	149 drums		
Paraformaldehyde, formaldehyde based resin	30 tons		
Methylimidazole, bulk	11.88 tons		
Butyl acrylate, unused product	11700 lbs		
Mixed acrylates, unused product	27480 lbs		
Xylene, unused	2765 lbs		
Styrene, unused	7140 lbs		
Synthron produced surfactant	440 lbs		
Misc cylinders	9		
Asbestos, bulk	180 cu yds		
Non hazardous wastewater, bulk	130784 gal		
Silica (storage tower)	185 tons		
Transformers (pole mounted)	5		

[response.epa.gov/synthron](https://response.epa.gov/synthron)