

Cleanup and Redevelopment Activities at former Despatch Laundry and Whiteway Cleaners Site

Geographic/Hennepin/#27.08/September 2003

This Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) fact sheet describes the plan to address risks posed by soil contamination at the former Despatch Laundry and Whiteway Cleaners site in Minneapolis (the Site). High levels of perchloroethylene (PCE), a type of dry cleaning solvent, are present in the soil and ground water beneath the Site. In addition, petroleum contamination is present in the soil from a gas station that once occupied part of the Site. This fact sheet summarizes the investigations recently conducted at the Site by the MPCA, the cleanup action proposed by Hennepin County to address the contaminated soil, and the proposed Site redevelopment plan.

Where is the Site and what is the current Site status?

This Site is located on the southwest corner of Stevens Avenue South and East 26th Street in Minneapolis. All of the buildings on the Site have been demolished. The property was forfeited to the State of Minnesota in 1994 due to nonpayment of property taxes. Hennepin County oversees the property. Hennepin County currently leases the property to the Nicollet Avenues Business Association for use as a parking lot.



What is the Site history?

From the early 1900s to the mid 1980s, dry cleaning services and a gas station operated at the property. These businesses used and stored chemicals with the potential to pollute the soil and ground water.

Beginning in the late 1980s, a series of limited environmental investigations were conducted at the Site by various parties including the former property owner, potential buyers, and concerned units of government. The investigations indicated that elevated concentrations of PCE and petroleum were present in the soil as well as the ground water beneath the Site.



In 1994, Hennepin County conducted a site-wide investigation to evaluate the extent of soil and ground-water contamination and to determine if the Site posed a risk to neighbors living or working near the property. Based on the investigation, it was concluded that it is unlikely that there is a risk to public health since the chemicals in the soil and ground water are buried underground. People would have to eat, drink, inhale or touch the contamination to be harmed by it. The Site is covered with gravel, so contact with the contaminants is highly unlikely. The public drinking water supply is not taken from ground water in the area, so exposure through drinking water is not a risk. Nevertheless, the investigation showed that the concentrations of PCE in soil and ground water beneath the Site were very high.

In 1998, the MPCA placed the Site on the Minnesota Permanent List of Priorities, also called the state Superfund list. This made the Site eligible for state funds to conduct investigation and cleanup activities.

The MPCA wanted to more thoroughly investigate potential risks that might exist from the spread of ground-water contamination away from the Site and chemical vapors that could potentially accumulate in utilities and underground spaces near the Site. Subsequently, the MPCA retained Bay West to help determine the magnitude of ground-water contamination beneath and downgradient from (or in the direction of ground-water flow away from) the Site. The MPCA also directed Bay West to conduct an evaluation of chemical vapors in underground utility lines and the basements of surrounding buildings. Several new monitoring wells were installed on the Site and northeast (i.e. downgradient) of the Site to evaluate the concentrations of contaminants in shallow ground water and in deeper bedrock aquifers. A series of chemical vapor samples were collected and analyzed from various locations on and near the Site. These investigations continue.

The MPCA concluded that cleanup of the contaminated soil is necessary if the Site is to be redeveloped. Hennepin County volunteered to coordinate the soil contamination cleanup so that site redevelopment could proceed. Hennepin County also enrolled the Site in the VIC Program.

What are the proposed redevelopment plans and what type of soil cleanup is proposed?

In early 2003, Whittier neighborhood members with Hennepin County and Minneapolis Community Development Agency assistance came to a consensus regarding reuse of the Site and selected the development team of Alan Chazin and Ed Bell to construct a mixed, commercial and residential development on the Site. The development will be a slab-on-grade building with first floor commercial space and upper-level, owner-occupied apartments.

To enable the redevelopment to proceed, Hennepin County contracted with Bay West to prepare a response action plan (RAP) for soil cleanup. The RAP was submitted to the MPCA VIC program in April 2003. Hennepin County applied for grant money from the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, the Metropolitan Council, and requested funding within its own department in May 2003 to help pay the Site's environmental cleanup costs. The MPCA approved the RAP for the Site in April 2003. Hennepin County received sufficient funding for Site cleanup to allow redevelopment to proceed.

The RAP consists of installation and operation of a soil-vapor extraction system (SVES) in the soil zone above the ground water (from the surface to about 65 feet below ground). The installation of a SVES was recommended in the, "Focused Feasibility Study - Whiteway Cleaners," Bay West report dated January 2003. It was concluded in this feasibility study that SVES is the most effective remedial approach for removing PCE and petroleum from soil above the water table. This technology is also called forced-air venting and in-situ air stripping. It involves the removal of air and contaminants from the pore space of soil.

The SVES consists of a series of vapor extraction wells that are installed in the subsurface to various depths. The wells are open to the soil through the screened (slotted-pipe) section of the well. The wells are connected near the ground surface and attached to a



blower which creates a vacuum that pulls air and chemicals in vapor form out of the ground. Because of the high PCE and petroleum concentrations in the soil, the SVES will be constructed with an emission control system that removes chemicals from the blower exhaust using granular-activated carbon (GAC).

As described in the RAP, the SVES will be installed and begin operating prior to the start of redevelopment activities. The SVES will operate during construction and will continue to operate after redevelopment is complete, until all contamination that can be removed from the soil has been extracted. The buildings that will be constructed on the Site have been designed to keep any residual chemical vapors out with a vapor barrier and an auxiliary vapor collection system that will be installed beneath the building.

Is there a health risk to neighbors living or working near the Site?

Currently, there is very little risk to users of the parking lot or passers-by from direct contact with the chemicals at the Site. However, MPCA investigations have shown that measurable concentrations of vapors from the buried contamination have migrated into the storm sewer and into the basements of a few of the buildings around the Site. Long-term exposure to these vapors may be a potential health concern. The MPCA is conducting further testing to determine the risk. Note, the chemical vapors detected in the storm sewer and basements near the Site are expected to decrease or be eliminated entirely after the SVES is operational. The MPCA will continue to monitor the chemical vapors after the SVES is operational.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has reviewed the Bay West reports and provided technical review for the MPCA as well as the Bay West project

team. The MDH is developing a health consultation that will provide a more detailed discussion of the risks posed by chemicals at the Site. The health consultation will be available to the public sometime this fall.

When does installation of the remediation system begin?

SVES installation is scheduled to begin in October or November 2003, with start-up of the system immediately upon completion. The vapor extraction wells will be installed using a truck-mounted, well-drilling rig. Trenches will be excavated between the wells to install piping. The piping will connect the wells with the blower and emission control system. The blower system will be located in a small building to be constructed in the west-central portion of the property. The GAC emission control system will be housed in two adjacent dumpster-sized vessels. During well drilling and trench excavation activities, workers on-site may be wearing protective Tyvek coveralls and, possibly, respirators because they may come in direct contact with PCE- and petroleum- contaminated soil.

Redevelopment activities are expected to begin in spring of 2004.

For more information

Contact one of the MPCA project team members: VIC project manager Jerry Stahnke at (651) 297-1459, hydrogeologist Cathy O'Dell at (651) 282-2381 for questions about the soil cleanup, Steve Schoff at (651) 297-1790 for questions about the chemical vapor or groundwater investigations, or information officer Mike Rafferty (651) 297-8294 for general questions.

MPCA's Web site: <http://www.pca.state.mn.us>