



HOOKER (S AREA) NIAGARA FALLS, NY

Cleanup Activities

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Background

The Hooker (S-Area) site is a former landfill in Niagara Falls, New York. Occidental Chemical Corporation (OCC) owns the 8-acre site property. OCC disposed of about 63,000 tons of chemical processing wastes at the landfill from 1947 to 1961. OCC also used the landfill for disposal of other wastes and debris, a practice that ended in 1975. Landfilling activities contaminated soil and groundwater with hazardous chemicals. Following cleanup, the site no longer poses a threat to nearby residents or the environment. Long-term groundwater treatment and monitoring are ongoing.

What Has Been Done to Clean Up the Site?

Immediate Actions: The City of Niagara Falls closed the contaminated main intake tunnel at its drinking water treatment plant (DWTP) and put an emergency tunnel into service to alleviate the threat of contaminating drinking water.

Long-term Cleanup: EPA selected a containment remedy to prevent further chemical migration from the landfill toward the DWTP and into and under the Niagara River. The remedy includes: (1) a cut-off wall (barrier wall) to encompass the landfill and off-site areas contaminated with chemicals in overburden soils; (2) an overburden collection system in the barrier wall that comprises horizontal drains and groundwater extraction wells to contain and collect both aqueous phase liquid (APL, or leachate) and non-aqueous phase liquid (NAPL) chemicals; (3) a bedrock remedial system consisting of groundwater extraction wells and NAPL recovery wells; (4) an on-site leachate storage facility for separating and storing APL and NAPL chemicals prior to treatment; (5) a carbon adsorption facility for treating APL chemicals; (6) incineration of NAPL chemicals; (7) a final cap; and (8) monitoring programs to determine the effectiveness of the remedy.

Cleanup started in 1996 and has been completed. A barrier was installed around all contaminated areas to make sure pollutants would not migrate away from the site. Groundwater pumping wells and drains were put in to collect and remove polluted liquid. On-site separation, storage and treatment facilities were built. Currently, there is no drinking water well connected to the contaminated area. The old drinking water treatment plant was completely demolished by late 1997. Construction of a replacement plant at a new location finished in March 1997. Asbestos waste materials were removed and disposed of before the plant's demolition. A drainage system was installed to collect polluted water and prevent it from migrating into the Niagara River. A final cap over the contaminated area was completed in 2002. A security fence now surrounds the site. EPA oversaw the installation of wells to track the extent and possible movement of contaminated water. A semi-annual sampling program allows EPA to observe the progress and tweak the systems for efficient operations.

The water quality samples showed low-level contamination from volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are potentially harmful contaminants that can easily evaporate into the air. EPA and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) decided to inject a solution into the tunnel area to identify the source of the contamination and help determine if additional cleanup is needed. Currently, as a result of the actions taken, there are no people, plants or animals that might be exposed to contaminants from the site.

What Is the Current Site Status?

The site is being addressed in three phases: immediate actions and two long-term remedial phases focused on cleanup of the entire site and construction of a municipal drinking water treatment plant.

The construction of a new DWTP at a new location addresses the threat to the drinking water supply from S-Area. The new plant replaced the old facility, which supplied drinking water to city residents for the past 83 years. The new plant was completed and placed online in 2000.

Since the startup of remedial systems in 1996, over 600 million gallons of contaminated groundwater have been treated and 227,000 gallons of NAPL have been collected for incineration. Over 210,000 gallons of the collected NAPL have been transported to an off-site incinerator for treatment.

Long-term groundwater treatment and monitoring are ongoing.

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