



The Metamorphosis of an Eyesore into a Community Asset



The Coleman-Evans Wood Preserving Site.

Coleman Evans

The Coleman-Evans Wood Preserving Company, known at one time for creating fence posts that "can last forever," is now the site of one of Jacksonville's most notorious eyesores and considered one of the nation's most hazardous waste sites. To the public, this site is 11 acres of land surrounded with chain link fence that is occupied by state of the art equipment and large piles of contaminated soil.

The Coleman-Evans Wood Preserving Company

The Coleman-Evans Wood Preserving Company operated a wood treatment operation at the site using pentachlorophenol as a preservative until 1989. From 1954 to 1970, the company deposited its waste sludge in two unlined disposal pits composed of sand filters. Some sludge was washed off and contaminated the soil in residential back yards adjacent to the site. In March 1983, samples were taken that confirmed the presence of contamination in the shallow soils and in the water table aquifer. More site sampling was performed in March and July 1991, which confirmed the presence of dioxin contamination in the groundwater and on-site soils, as well as the existence of free product (diesel) floating on the water table. As a result, additional analysis of the dioxin was needed to define the volume and extent of dioxin contaminated soils and fine tune the proposed treatment scenario.

The Decontamination Process Faces Obstacles

Because the site was placed on the national priorities list (NPL) in 1983, it is now considered to be a "teenager site." EPA has encountered several obstacles in clean up of this infamous site—the most prominent being the method used for treating the contaminated soil. At the time the Coleman-Evans Wood Preserving Company site was placed on the NPL, the only technology available for treating dioxin wastes was incineration. Jacksonville did not allow incineration within the city limits, which further complicated an already challenging clean-up process for this "mega-site." Randall Chaffins, the site Project Manager, was forced to consider alternate methods for treating the soil. Chaffins proposed an innovative technology to treat the soil—Thermal Desorption. This kind of treatment had never been used for a dioxin site, which made this site a pioneer. When the initial Thermal Desorption Unit (TDU) did not work successfully in its first

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JUST THE FACTS:

- EPA released in September 2002 an additional \$2.5 million in September to cleanup up the 11-acre site.
- To date, EPA has invested over \$37 million in cleanup actions.
- More than 300 tons of contaminated soil are treated per day; approximately 70,000 tons are expected to be treated by the end of 2002.

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attempts, EPA chose to temporarily shut down the project in order to thoroughly examine the technology and to redesign the unit. Chaffins formed the Coleman-Evans Remediation team and convened over the course of eight months to redevelop the TDU. Chaffins and the team were successful in their efforts, and the TDU now treats 300 tons of contaminated soil per day and expects to treat approximately 70,000 tons of soil by the end of 2002.

EPA Working with the Community

Whitehouse, the community in which the site is housed, naturally had some concerns about the site. Perhaps most sensitive is the Whitehouse Elementary school, located within a few blocks of the site. Parents were concerned for their children's safety. To help ease their fears, EPA tested for PCP and dioxin at the school. EPA findings confirmed that no harmful contaminants were in the soil. One parent stated, "I really appreciate them doing that for us and making sure our kids are safe," Jacksonville.com Web site. The community is pleased with EPA's consistent monitoring of such areas as the Whitehouse Elementary school. One resident stated in the Jacksonville.com Web site, "As long as they don't have any problems, I'm OK with it. I feel real confident now and will as long as they keep us aware of what's happening."

Duval County (Jacksonville) is excited about what use the Superfund site will have once cleaned up. Many residents would like to turn the "eyesore" into a community center. Others would like to see paved walking paths, tennis and basketball courts, skate parks, and other paved recreational sites. EPA provided the city with a \$100,000 grant that the community has used to hire recreational planners who are working with community leaders to plan the site's future uses. It's been a long time in the making, but this community looks forward to converting this "eyesore" into a great community asset.

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Thermal Desorption Unit (TDU)