



Superfund's Frequent Flyer Program Keeps Neighbors Informed and Involved



EPA excavates some backyards to depth of 14 feet.

Federal Creosote

In Somerset County, NJ, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund program is using its "frequent flyer program"—informational notices—to provide residents quick updates on what is to occur in the community in the immediate future during the cleanup of contaminated properties. Since 1998, the Borough of Manville has interacted with EPA as the agency has addressed creosote contamination at the Federal Creosote Superfund site, which formerly supported a wood treatment facility. Because the soil contamination was pervasive in the residential community, EPA knew that the cleanup could cause stress to the families and neighbors affected.

Carole Petersen, Chief of the New Jersey Remediation Branch with EPA Region 2, said of the Federal Creosote cleanup, "The stress of active remediation within a densely populated residential development is addressed by keeping the community informed of work progress by a proactive community outreach program. This program includes distributing flyers door to door on a frequent basis to inform residents what activities are coming up next."

Federal Creosote Site

From 1910 until the mid-1950s, the Federal Creosote site was used as a wood treatment facility, which occupied approximately 50 acres in the Borough of Manville. The facility treated railroad ties and telephone poles with coal tar creosote. The excess product was discharged as creosote-contaminated sludges, sediments, process residuals, preservative drippings, and spent process liquid into canals to two lagoons located on the site.

In the mid-1960s, the property exchanged hands and was developed into 35 acres of residential property and 15 acres of commercial property. The Claremont Development residential community of 137 homes and the Rustic Acres Mall were built over much of the former facility property. Unfortunately, the redeveloped property was built on top of the untreated contaminated soil. On at least one occasion, creosote sludge seeped into a residential basement sump and was pumped out into the storm sewer.

In the spring of 1998, EPA conducted extensive surface soil sampling to determine whether there was any immediate threat to current residents. This sampling revealed that surface soil at approximately 19 homes had unacceptable levels of carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (material associated with wood treating chemicals).

JUST THE FACTS:

- In 2001 and 2002, \$46 million has been funded so far to clean up the Federal Creosote site.
- A total of \$68.4 million of funding has been committed to date for site cleanup.
- The 50-acre site is undergoing excavation to remove 40 years of creosote contamination. To date, 56,600 cubic yards of contaminated soil has been excavated and 36 million gallons of contaminated water cleaned.

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EPA Cleanup Actions

"Because of the potential risk to residents, EPA expedited its response," said EPA's Petersen. EPA has been addressing the cleanup in three stages, or Operable Units. Operable Units 1 and 2 consist of cleaning up the residential soils of the site. Operable Unit 3 addresses the commercial mall soils and site wide groundwater. Currently, EPA is focusing its remedial cleanup actions on the contaminated residential soil.

Prior to excavating the contaminated soil, EPA bought 17 properties and relocated the residents. To date, EPA has excavated 56,600 cubic yards of contaminated soil that was shipped off site for treatment and disposal. The Agency also has cleaned more than 36 million gallons of contaminated water with a dewatering/filtration system.

Frequent Flyers

"The short term impact of a cleanup on surrounding residents may be characterized as stressful. The work being performed is sometimes intrusive and carried out by numerous and large scale construction equipment which, in many cases, is only several feet from residential dwellings and, in most cases, on residential properties that are currently occupied," explained EPA's Petersen. To combat the nervousness among residents, EPA took a very proactive approach with the residents of the Borough of Manville.

Before cleanup activities started, EPA conceded to the Borough of Manville community that there was no way to perform this cleanup without some disruption to the residential community. By placing this truth "on the table," EPA and the community worked together on ways to minimize impacts. One such solution was the "Frequent Flyer Program."

Informational flyers are delivered to each residence immediately before work is to take place in an area of the community. For example, when soil sampling of residential properties is to begin, flyers are distributed to property owners, making them aware of activities they may notice in the community over the next few days, such as flags marking underground utility locations, the types of equipment to be used, number of personnel involved in the work, and the duration of the work. "The community has exhibited a greater tolerance for inconveniences when they are made aware of them before they occur," Petersen noted.

The Mayor of Manville, Angelo Corradino, was recently quoted in the New Jersey Magazine as stating, "The numbers EPA presented to the town made me very nervous. They talked about 1,000 truck loads of dirt having to be removed. But EPA made it seem like they weren't even there. They hired only the best contractors, there have been zero complaints, and they were sensitive when dealing with the buyouts."

Echoing the Mayor's comments, business administrator Gary Garwacke said, "From my viewpoint, it's like it's not even happening in town. It's been so quiet. I think the EPA has done a good job of keeping people informed of what is happening."

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Visit the EPA Region 2 web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/region2/Superfund>



Through the winter snow, EPA conducts soil sampling for odor control testing before start of widescale excavation.