



New York State
Department of
Health

in conjunction with



Dear Interested Citizen:

This fact sheet is to inform you of the site characterization planned for the former 115th Street Works Site. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact:

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Con Edison
4 Irving Place
New York, NY 10003
Toll-free (877) 602-6633

For site-related environmental questions, please contact:

Joseph Moloughney, P.E.
Project Manager
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233
(518) 402-9662

For site-related health questions, please contact:

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Fact Sheet

August 2002

Start of Investigation of a Former Manufactured Gas Plant at Manhattan Center for Science and Math

East 115th Street Works Site

Introduction

Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. (Con Edison), together with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), is providing this update on the site characterization activities planned for the former 115th Street Works (currently Manhattan Center for Science and Math), a property which is the site of a historic manufactured gas plant (MGP). While initial activities at the site included a study of indoor air, the site characterization will investigate soil and ground water.

Con Edison has entered into a voluntary cleanup agreement with the NYSDEC to identify, investigate and remediate, if necessary, this and other sites that were previously operated by Con Edison or its corporate predecessors as manufactured gas plants or manufactured gas holder stations. The proposed work includes testing and monitoring for materials remaining from these historic sites and is being coordinated with the NYSDEC and NYSDOH. Working closely with state and local agencies, Con Edison will be taking responsibility for coordinating and funding the work and will make every effort to keep public inconveniences to a minimum.

What Were Manufactured Gas Plants?

Manufactured gas plants were operated between the 1800s and mid-1900s, before the development of natural gas systems, to convert coal and oil into gas for heating, lighting and cooking. Byproducts of this production process included coal tar and purifier wastes. Coal tar is a dark, viscous fluid with a distinctive acrid odor. The substances of concern in coal tar can be divided into two categories: BTEX compounds and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). BTEX compounds are benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene. These are volatile hydrocarbons found in most petroleum products such as gasoline. PAHs are made up of several semi-volatile compounds. These compounds are also found in many petroleum products, such as asphalt. Purifier wastes are materials formed during removal of other unwanted chemicals from the gas before it was sent out to customers.

Con Edison, NYSDEC and NYSDOH are committed to keeping the community informed during every step of this project. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the appropriate office listed on the left.

Site Background

Historic information indicates that the East 115th Street Works was built by the Standard Gas Light Company of the City of New York and was closed prior to that company's merger with Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. in June 1936 and operated from 1895 to 1936. In 1937, the site was turned over to Con Edison of New York and, according to historic information, was not operated as a manufactured gas plant while under the ownership of Con Edison. The plant was dismantled over the next two years. In 1941, a public high school was erected on the property and is still present today as The Manhattan Center for Science and Math.

Project Status and Schedule

Indoor air testing was conducted in late June 2002 and results have been made available to the NYSDEC, NYSDOH and the City of New York. The site characterization will occur later in the summer after the work plan for that study has been reviewed and approved by the NYSDEC and will involve soil and groundwater testing. If contamination associated with these facilities is found, a remediation plan acceptable to the NYSDEC and NYSDOH will be developed for the site. Additional testing may be conducted on adjacent properties prior to the remediation plan development to ensure that the full extent of the impacts has been identified and that a proper remedy is selected.

During the site characterization, comprehensive efforts will be made to protect the community from potential hazards, including the use of real-time air monitoring in accordance with the NYSDOH's Community Air Monitoring Plan. All practical measures will be taken to minimize any inconvenience to the surrounding community.

Public understanding and involvement are an integral part of a successful investigation and remediation program. To provide you with the most up-to-date and accurate information regarding manufactured gas plants, Con Edison has created a series of informational resources including fact sheets, such as this one, a toll-free hotline, and internet content. In addition, a site citizen participation plan will be developed to provide for public participation in the remedial program for the site. Local repositories for the site-related documents and reports will also be established. As always, your questions or comments are important to us. Please contact us at the phone numbers listed on the front of this fact sheet.
