New York State Department of Health

in conjunction with

conEdison

Dear Interested Citizen:

This fact sheet is to inform you of the site characterization planned for the West 65th Street Works Site. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact:

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

For site-related health questions, please contact:

Dawn Hetrick, P.E.
NYSDOH
Environmental Investigations
Flanigan Square
547 River Street, Room 300
Troy, NY 12180
(518) 402-7880

Fact Sheet

August 2002

Start of Investigation of a Former Manufactured Gas Plant at Martin Luther King Jr. High School

West 65th Street Works

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 West 65th Street Works (currently Martin Luther King, Jr. High School and a Con Edison facility), a property which is the site of a historic manufactured gas plant. 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 to determine whether materials associated with these operations are present 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 manufactured 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

The West 65th Street Works formerly existed on one city block (Block 1157) located within the Borough of Manhattan, City and County of New York, New York. The West 65th Street Works are believed to have operated from circa 1868 until 1879. After the manufactured gas plant was closed, portions of the site continued as a manufactured gas holder station and later as a natural gas distributor until 1957. After 1917, portions of the site were also used for a cable yard, gas station and automobile garages, a steam plant, and a six-story service building. In 1967, the eastern portion of the site was purchased by the City of New York. By 1973, the construction of the Martin Luther King, Jr. High School on that section of the site was completed. The remainder of Block 1157 (Lot 1) is owned by Con Edison and is used for an electrical substation.

Project Status and Schedule

Indoor air sampling was conducted at Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in July 2002 and the results have been made available to the NYSDEC, NYSDOH and City of New York. The site characterization will be conducted later this year after the work plan for the study has been reviewed by the NYSDEC. If contamination associated with the historic MGP or gas holder station operations is found, a remediation plan acceptable to the NYSDEC and NYSDOH will be developed for the site. Prior to the development of that plan a Remedial Investigation providing for extensive additional soil and groundwater sampling will be conducted to ensure that the full extent of the impacts has been identified and that a proper remedy is selected.

During the investigation, extensive efforts will be made to protect the community from potential hazards, including the use of real-time air monitoring in accordance with the DOH'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 outline the steps to be taken to provide for public participation in the remedial program for the site and the location of document repositories for site related documents and reports. 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.