



# FACT SHEET

November 2007

## South Hill Area, Ithaca, New York

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### INTRODUCTION

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health (NYSDEC and NYSDOH, respectively), is currently overseeing a number of environmental investigations in the South Hill area of Ithaca, New York (Figure 1). The purpose of this Fact Sheet is to provide a brief update on each of these investigations, and to announce an upcoming availability session and public meeting.

### EMERSON POWER TRANSMISSION

The 110-acre Emerson Power Transmission facility is located at 620 South Aurora Street, along the northeast and southwest portions of South Hill. The facility's original building was constructed in 1906 by Morse Industrial Corporation, which manufactured steel roller chain for the automobile industry. From approximately 1928 to 1983, Borg-Warner Corporation owned the property and manufactured automotive parts. Up until the late 1970s, Borg-Warner used trichloroethene (TCE), a common industrial solvent, for cleaning and degreasing metal parts. In 1983, Morse was purchased from Borg-Warner by Emerson. Emerson continues to operate the facility for the manufacture of parts for the power transmission industry.

Beginning in the late 1980s, a series of environmental investigations conducted in and around the plant by Emerson revealed elevated levels of TCE and other volatile organic compounds in the groundwater. As a result, Emerson installed a groundwater extraction system in the 1990s to intercept and treat contaminated groundwater migrating from the site. In addition, soil vapor and indoor air testing was initiated in 2004 in the neighborhood to the north of the plant, which is in the predominant direction of groundwater flow. To date, vapor mitigation systems (i.e., sub-slab depressurization systems) have been installed on 25 homes, and an additional 18 homes have been offered mitigation. Ten other homes have been placed on a monitoring program.

In September 2007, Emerson initiated a supplemental environmental investigation to evaluate 25 Areas of Concern located throughout the plant. These Areas of Concern were identified in a December 2005 Onsite Assessment Report, which included a review of all available plant records. Other investigation activities include further evaluation of the fire water reservoir, which was identified in previous work as a source of groundwater contamination, as well as additional soil vapor and indoor air testing.

A report summarizing the investigation is scheduled to be submitted in early December 2007, with a Feasibility Study to follow in March 2008. The NYSDEC expects to select a remedy to address the entire site by June 2008, and it is anticipated that Emerson will begin remediation activities in July 2008.

## **FORMER AXIOHM FACILITY**

This 42-acre site is located at 950 Danby Road opposite the entrance to Ithaca College. The property had been vacant land and/or used for agricultural purposes prior to being purchased from the college by the National Cash Register Company (NCR) in 1953. NCR utilized the site for the manufacture of adding machines, cash registers, and printers until 1992. The use of TCE was associated with these operations.

From 1992 to 1994, AT&T Global Information Solutions owned and operated the facility, in part for the manufacture and assembly of printers. Axiohm IPB, Inc. (now TPG IPB, Inc.) acquired the property in 1994 for use as its corporate headquarters and for the final assembly and servicing of printers. Axiohm ceased operations on site in July 2003.

The site is currently owned by South Hill Business Campus, LLC, and includes a 265,000 square-foot building. Plans are to redevelop the building into a multi-tenant professional office complex. In addition, a portion of the building will be redeveloped for use by light manufacturing businesses and non-manufacturing business start-ups. In 2005 the site was accepted into the NYSDEC's Brownfield Cleanup Program because the planned redevelopment was potentially complicated by TCE contamination in soil and groundwater.

Pursuant to the terms of a Brownfield Cleanup Agreement entered into with the State, South Hill Business Campus performed an environmental investigation in 2006 to further define the nature and extent of contamination on the site, to identify contaminant source areas, and to complete an on-site and off-site human health exposure assessment. The results of the investigation, submitted in a May 2007 report, confirmed the presence of elevated levels of TCE and other volatile organic compounds in the groundwater. The potential for soil vapor intrusion into the on-site building was also identified, primarily beneath the southern portion of the building where groundwater contamination was identified. In response, a sub-slab depressurization system was installed as a precautionary measure.

In conjunction with the investigation report, a draft Remedial Work Plan was submitted. The plan sets forth an approach to remediate the site such that it is fully protective of human health and the environment, while taking into account the current, intended, and reasonably anticipated future use of the property. Review of the work plan is on hold, pending the completion of additional investigative work by South Hill Business Campus to address data gaps identified by the NYSDEC and the NYSDOH during review of the investigation report. A revised report is scheduled to be submitted in early December 2007. Both the report and the work plan will be subject to a 45-day public comment period, with NYSDEC approval expected in mid-to-late January 2008. Remediation activities will commence immediately after approval, weather permitting.

## **NCR SEWER**

During investigations previously completed by Emerson and South Hill Business Campus, contaminated soil vapor was detected in the vicinity of a sanitary sewer line on South Hill. The NYSDEC is currently investigating this sewer line to identify the source(s) of contaminated soil vapor and to determine if the bedding or trench associated with the line represents a preferential pathway for the contaminated soil vapor to migrate to surrounding properties.

The line originates beneath the building on the former Axiohm facility and extends in a northerly direction across the eastern portion of Emerson's property, then continues along Danby Road/South Aurora Street to Columbia Street. At Columbia Street, the line runs west one block to Turner Place, then turns northward again and runs two blocks to East Clinton Street. It crosses Six-Mile Creek and eventually discharges to the local wastewater treatment facility. It is identified on City of Ithaca utility drawings as the "National Cash Register" sewer.

In November 2005, in conjunction with ongoing investigation activities, Emerson collected four soil vapor samples along the portion of the line that traverses its property to evaluate the potential for releases of contaminated vapors. Six volatile organic compounds were detected, including TCE.

In June 2006, South Hill Business Campus collected three soil vapor samples along the sewer line on its property as part of the Brownfield investigation. The concentration of TCE was elevated near the center of the site, but the level dropped off significantly at the property line. Re-sampling at the property line in August 2007 by South Hill Business Campus yielded a similar result.

In July 2007, Emerson collected three additional soil vapor samples along the sewer line in an area between the former Axiohm facility and the November 2005 sample locations. Elevated levels of TCE were detected in each of the samples, with the highest concentration corresponding to a point where the sewer line is intersected by a lateral from Ithaca College to the east. In response, the NYSDEC arranged for two soil vapor samples to be collected along the lateral in October 2007. These samples also exhibited elevated TCE levels, and the NYSDEC is now in the process of re-mobilizing its contractor to collect additional soil vapor samples along the sewer line and the lateral. In addition, Emerson has sampled the soil vapor along the main line on Columbia Street as part of its investigation. The results will be provided in Emerson's December 2007 investigation report.

## **AVAILABILITY SESSION/PUBLIC MEETING**

An availability session has been scheduled for December 13<sup>th</sup> at the Ithaca Town Hall from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. During this time, NYSDEC and NYSDOH representatives will be available to speak with interested parties on an individual basis. That evening, from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM, State officials will conduct a public meeting at the same location to discuss the status of the above projects in greater detail. This will provide an additional opportunity for members of the community to ask questions relative to the work being performed.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Document repositories have been established for each of these projects at the Tompkins County Public Library, 101 East Green Street, Ithaca. For questions or additional information, please feel free to contact the following representatives:

### Project Questions

Karen A. Cahill  
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Phone: (315) 426-7551

### Related Health Questions

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Emerson

NCR Sewer

Sewer Lateral

Former Axiohm Facility

Figure 1  
South Hill Area  
Ithaca, N.Y.



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