



SOUTH HILL UPDATE

June 2009

INTRODUCTION

This is the third in a series of updates being issued by the NYSDEC in an effort to keep the community informed regarding the status of investigation and remediation activities in the South Hill area of Ithaca, NY.

EMERSON POWER TRANSMISSION

In February 2009 the NYSDEC released for public review and comment a proposed amendment to the December 1994 Record of Decision (ROD). The purpose of the amendment is to identify remedial actions to address environmental and health-related concerns that either have not been adequately addressed by the 1994 ROD, or that have been identified through subsequent investigations. Proposed activities on the Emerson property include upgrades to the existing groundwater collection and treatment system, in situ (in place) groundwater treatment beneath the fire water reservoir and the former Department 507 degreaser area within Building 4, mitigation of soil vapor intrusion into on-site buildings, and removal of weathered petroleum product from the subsurface in several discreet areas of the plant. A number of these activities were completed in March and April 2009 as Interim Remedial Measures (IRMs), while the remainder will be implemented once the amendment is finalized in early July 2009. A work plan will be submitted by Emerson following finalization of the amendment to identify potential in situ groundwater treatment technologies to undergo pilot studies prior to selection of a particular technology for full-scale implementation.

The amendment also requires Emerson to complete an evaluation of potential remedial actions to address the migration of soil vapor into the surrounding neighborhood. The NYSDEC has been meeting with Emerson and its consultant on a regular basis to discuss various remedial strategies and an Alternatives Analysis Report evaluating these alternatives is expected by mid-July 2009. Following review of the report, the NYSDEC will prepare a Proposed Remedial Action Plan (PRAP) to identify its preferred remedial alternative. The PRAP will be distributed for public review and comment in late August 2009, with a public meeting anticipated some time in September 2009. Upon the close of the public comment period, a final remedy to address the migration of soil vapor into the surrounding neighborhood will be selected by the NYSDEC in a separate Record of Decision.

FORMER AXIOHM FACILITY

Full-scale implementation of the in situ chemical oxidation (ISCO) technology was completed in August 2008. ISCO involves the introduction of an oxidizing agent into the subsurface to treat groundwater contaminated with volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Two rounds of groundwater monitoring conducted since that time (January and April 2009) have shown VOC concentrations to be somewhat static across the site, although a decrease was observed in several individual wells. The effectiveness of the technology will continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis for a minimum of two years, during which time additional treatment will be performed as necessary.

ADDITIONAL WORK BEING CONDUCTED BY THE NYSDEC

Between the fall of 2004 and the winter of 2006-2007, Emerson conducted a series of soil vapor intrusion studies in South Hill to determine if historic releases of VOCs from the facility during Borg Warner's ownership had impacted the indoor air quality in surrounding homes and structures. The work was completed in five phases and involved the sampling of over 100 structures. Approximately 45 mitigation systems were installed by Emerson as a result; 37 of these systems were installed in accordance with Emerson's voluntary mitigation offer, while eight were installed based on the New York State Department of Health's soil vapor intrusion decision matrices to reduce the potential for soil vapor detected under a building to impact the indoor air in that building.

Subsequently, the NYSDEC sought to expand the investigation to include an area that, in general, is bounded by Turner Place to the west, Aurora Street to the east, Pleasant Street to the north and Hillview Place to the south (i.e., Phase VI). The NYSDEC approached Emerson and National Cash Register (NCR, former owners of the Axiohm facility) to perform the sampling, but each declined. Accordingly, in November 2008 the NYSDEC utilized its own contractor to conduct the work. Twenty-one structures were evaluated, and mitigation systems have been offered to four property owners.

In addition, as a result of the Phase VI study and a series of soil vapor investigations conducted along area sewers by the NYSDEC's contractor between September 2007 and April 2008, a seventh phase of structure sampling is now planned. The proposed study area includes approximately 30 lots on upper Columbia Street between South Aurora Street and Hudson Street.

The NYSDEC has initiated discussions with Therm regarding this work, since the data suggests that activities at the plant may have contributed to the contamination. Regardless of the outcome of these discussions, the NYSDEC has already begun making the necessary arrangements with its contractor to perform the work during the upcoming 2009-2010 heating season.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information regarding these projects is available at the following locations.

Tompkins County Public Library
101 East Green Street
Ithaca, NY 14850
Phone: (607) 272-4557
Hours: M-Th 10:00 AM - 8:15PM
F-Sa 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Su 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM

NYSDEC Region 7
615 Erie Boulevard West
Syracuse, NY 13204-2400
Phone: (315) 426-7551
Hours: M-F 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8669.html>

<http://www.Ithaca-SHIP.org>