

Environmental Fact Sheet



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10

September 2002

Tests for Dioxin at Poles, Inc. Site Show Low Risk

In this fact sheet you will find the results of recent dioxin tests at the Poles, Inc. site and information about next steps for cleanup at the site.

Soils and Groundwater Tested for Dioxin

Earlier this summer, soil samples were taken from Poles, Inc., a nearby residence, and the Idaho Hill Elementary school. A groundwater sample was also collected. None of the samples found dioxin at levels that pose adverse health effects. Samples were tested for 17 compounds known as the "family of dioxins." The amounts of those 17 compounds found in soil samples were added together and the total value for the dioxin family is below EPA's guidance level for soils.

For groundwater, there is a Federal Drinking Water Standard for the most toxic of the 17 compounds. We looked at the most toxic compound in the family, and compared it to the Federal Drinking Water Standard. That compound was not found in the groundwater sample taken at the Poles, Inc. site. However, other members of the dioxin family were detected. Therefore, EPA recommends that the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) conduct a "beneficial use study" to determine how people are using the site groundwater.

Information available at this time indicates that the site groundwater is not a source of drinking water, nor is it discharging into the Pend Orielle River. Therefore, detected compounds do not represent a risk to the surrounding community at this time.

Dioxin

Dioxin is a by-product of incineration, uncontrolled burning and certain industrial processes. Dioxin is created as a contaminant in the manufacturing process of penta (wood preservative). The term "dioxin" refers to a large family of compounds that includes 17 compounds of particular interest because it is thought that these compounds are chemically similar. Nevertheless, the toxicities of dioxins vary greatly, with the least toxic compound estimated to be 10,000 times less potent than the most toxic. Dioxins occur as complex mixtures of these 17 compounds.

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Poles, Inc. no longer treating poles – Spill prevention and air emissions no longer issues at the site.

During the Integrated Assessment conducted last summer, EPA found that the facility was not in compliance with Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure (SPCC) regulations and announced in its April 2002 fact sheet that Poles, Inc. would have to make modifications to its operations to avoid future spills. Recently,

Poles, Inc. ceased pole treating operations at the site and dismantled treatment process equipment. Because Poles, Inc. is no longer treating poles and above ground storage tanks have been removed, spill prevention and control measures required under the SPCC regulations no longer apply at the Poles, Inc. facility.

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Odors were a big concern for the surrounding community. In the April 2002 fact sheet, EPA announced that IDEQ would ask "Poles, Inc. to address odor emissions from the pole treating process and evaluate a variety of alternatives to manage odors." Because Poles, Inc. is no longer treating poles, there is no longer a need to manage odors. However, if Poles, Inc. ever decides to restart wood treating operations, the facility would need to apply for an operating permit to account for and control air emissions.

IDEQ to Oversee Future Cleanup Work

EPA has now deferred the Poles, Inc. site to IDEQ's Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) program. IDEQ has entered into an enforcement agreement with Poles, Inc. in which the company agrees to remediate site contamination. Specifically, Poles, Inc. will be required to 1) conduct a site soil and groundwater investigation to determine the vertical and horizontal extent of contamination which will define the scope of future cleanup; 2) complete a beneficial use survey for groundwater and 3) install a monitoring well that will monitor for compliance down gradient from the facility.

Analysis for dioxin concluded EPA's involvement at the Poles, Inc. site. For further information about future work at the Poles, Inc. site, please contact IDEQ (*see contact information at the end of this fact sheet*) as the lead agency in charge of overseeing future site activities.



Background Information

Poles, Inc. is now operating as a pole peeling facility, located 400 feet from the southwest bank of the Pend Orielle River in Oldtown, Bonner County, Idaho. Until recently, Poles, Inc. used pentachlorophenol (penta) as a wood preservative. The nearest residence is about 400 feet west of the facility. The Idaho Hill Elementary School is about 500 feet south of the facility.

In August 2001, EPA performed an integrated site assessment of the Poles, Inc. site. The assessment confirmed the releases of hazardous substances into site soils, groundwater and air. After the results of the site assessment were released in a February 4, 2002 report, citizens raised concerns about dioxin contamination at the site and EPA agreed to conduct additional analyses for dioxin.

For More Information – Contacts

IDEQ – Paula Lyon, Project Manager (208) 769-1422.

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For persons with hearing or speech disabilities call the Idaho Relay Service: Text Telephone (TTY) Customers 1-800-377-3529 or (Voice) 1-800-363-3771.

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Finding Documents on the Web

Please visit <http://www.epa.gov/region10/> and click on index and then "p" for Poles, Inc.

For people with disabilities: To request reasonable accommodations please contact Lilibeth Serrano at 1-800-424-4372 ext. 1388 (Voice). For TTY users: please call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339. Please provide one week advance notice for special requests.