

Environmental Fact Sheet



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10

April 2002

Community Meeting to Discuss Next Steps for Poles Inc.

On May 9, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will host a meeting to get input from citizens about next steps for the Poles, Inc. site in Oldtown, Idaho. We have heard concerns from the community about our environmental assessment of the site. EPA and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) are developing plans to address those concerns. We invite you to meet with EPA and IDEQ representatives to discuss these plans.

Summary of EPA's August 2001 Investigation: *What we sampled and what we found*

- Low levels of Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) including Penta-chlorophenol (penta), were found in surface and below-surface soil at the site.
- Low levels of penta were detected in off site air.
- No penta was found in the indoor air at the Idaho Hill Elementary School.
- No contaminants associated with Poles Inc. were found in the school dust samples, or in the surface soil samples at the school.
- Low levels of arsenic and other metals were found in the soils, sediments and groundwater both on and off site.

Public Meeting
Thursday, May 9, 2002
Idaho Hill Elementary School
402 East 3rd Street South
Oldtown, Idaho
7:00 - 9:00 PM

Michael Gearheard, Director of the Office for Environmental Cleanup, will be at the meeting so he can hear your thoughts first-hand, before EPA makes its final decision.

Arsenic and other metals are not known to be related to Poles Inc. The levels found are consistent with naturally occurring background levels. EPA contacted the local water supplier for Oldtown and Newport; they reported arsenic levels are below drinking water standards.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

EPA discussed the results of the investigation with the community of Oldtown at a public meeting on February 25, 2002. Following are some of the concerns expressed at the meeting and how the agencies are planning to address them.

Health of Children, Teachers, Workers and Their Families

While results from the environmental assessment indicate that the site is contaminated with PAHs including penta, the contaminants have not significantly moved outside of the facility. Chemicals associated with Poles, Inc. were not found at elevated levels in the sediment samples taken from the Pend Oreille River, or dust and soil samples from the Idaho Hill Elementary School. While the site does not represent an immediate or long-term health risk to the surrounding community, Poles Inc. will need to address the contamination found during the investigation.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) also reviewed air sampling data to determine whether current levels of penta in the air pose a health hazard. ATSDR concluded that current air exposures should not cause health effects. Past exposure to penta could not be evaluated. The Idaho Division of Health, Bureau of Environmental Health and Safety (BEHS), has developed a Public Health Assessment for the site which is currently under agency review. The assessment evaluates the potential human health impacts of the site based on EPA's sampling results. The document will be available for public review in the near future.

Chemical Smell Coming From the Facility

Annoying odors can cause short-term physical or psychological effects including difficulty concentrating, headache, fatigue, depression, irritability, nausea, dizziness and nasal stuffiness. IDEQ is asking Poles Inc. to address odor emissions from the Pole treating process and evaluate a variety of alternatives to manage odors.

Additional Dioxin Sampling

Citizens have raised concerns about potential dioxin contamination at the site, and have requested that EPA analyze existing samples for dioxin. During the environmental assessment, EPA analyzed samples for penta. At this meeting, EPA would like to discuss the request for dioxin sampling.

The Use of Penta as a Wood Preservative

EPA's pesticides branch is re-evaluating all pesticides originally registered before November 1984. There will be two opportunities for public input in this process. This fall a draft risk assessment for penta is expected to be available for public review and a Reregistration Eligibility Decision (RED) is expected to be available for comments in 2003. Both opportunities for input will be advertised at EPA's Pesticides Office website at www.epa.gov/pesticides. People wishing to comment should pay particular attention to "Open Comment Periods," "Wood Preservatives" and "Registration Eligibility (REDs)."

Redesigning Wood Treating Processes

It is outside EPA's jurisdiction to request that Poles Inc. develop a new wood treating process. However, EPA supports Pollution Prevention Resources Centers (PPRC) across the nation separate from the Cleanup Program. They are a network of nonprofit organizations dedicated to helping industries research alternative processes. The Pacific Northwest PPRC compiled a list of resources related to alternative wood treatments. To get a copy of the list, please contact Lilibeth Serrano (see contact information). To get in touch with experts who can further study the possibilities, please contact Chris Wiley at the Pacific Northwest PPRC at (206) 352-2050 or visit them at <http://www.pprc.org> and www.p2rx.org/.

Facility Operations

Although Poles Inc. voluntarily made improvements to its operations, more changes are needed. EPA recognizes that in recent years Poles Inc. has installed new lids on its dip tank, and a new pipe system to trap, condense and prevent vapors from escaping outside the facility, in response to community concerns. However, preventive measures are needed to avoid oil spills in the future. EPA will oversee these measures under the Spill Prevention Controls and Countermeasure (SPCC) regulations.

Specifically, Poles Inc. will need to:

- Prepare and carry out a plan detailing how the facility will prevent and control spills;
- Ensure that leaks or spills from the dip tank can not penetrate the soil;
- Install a containment wall around the tanks to stop spills from spreading beyond the tanks;
- Build a containment area or take other steps to control possible spills while trucks are loading oils into the tanks;
- Train employees on safe handling of products and maintain records of training; and
- Fence and lock the treatment plant area to protect it from trespassers and vandalism.

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS FOR EPA AND IDEQ

With the site investigation completed, EPA must determine the best management option for the site.

One option is referring the site to IDEQ for cleanup under the State's hazardous waste (or RCRA) regulatory program. If this option is selected, EPA would still be available for support as IDEQ conducts remedial investigations and corrective actions to define the nature and extent of contamination and select appropriate cleanup options, if needed, at this site. EPA has determined that corrective action under RCRA is substantively equivalent to cleanup under Superfund. In addition, the RCRA program is better suited to working with operating facilities.

EPA would like community input on formally deferring the site to the IDEQ's RCRA program. If the site is deferred, the IDEQ will assume the lead agency role for all other remedial investigations and corrective actions to address air, soil and groundwater contamination at the facility. IDEQ is already in the process of developing an enforcement agreement with Poles Inc., to address RCRA violations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Finding Documents on the Web

EPA has created a website for the Poles Inc. Integrated Assessment Report and appendices. To access the information, go to <http://www.epa.gov/region10/> and click on index and then "p" for Poles Inc.

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For people with disabilities: Please contact Lilibeth Serrano at 1-800-424-4372 ext. 1388 (Voice), if you have any requests for reasonable disability accommodations.

For TTY users: please call the Federal Relay Service at 1-800-877-8339 and then give the operator Mrs. Serrano's phone number. Please provide one week notice for special requests not related to ongoing programs and services.