

Appendix C: Site Background

Site Description

The Former AMCO Chemical Facility (Facility) is located at 1414 3rd Street in Oakland, California, one block south of the West Oakland Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station. The Facility is bordered on the north by a vacant lot owned by BART, on the west by residences, on the south by 3rd Street, and on the east by Nelson Mandela Parkway (formerly Cypress Street). The size of the Facility property is approximately 160 - 200 feet by 226 feet (about 0.9 acre). The Cypress (I-880) Freeway corridor crosses just to the south, passing over 3rd Street near the southeast corner of the property.



Third Street entrance to the Former AMCO Facility

The current land use at the Facility is light industrial; land use in surrounding areas is a mix of commercial/light industrial and residential. The nearest residences are immediately adjacent to the Facility along 3rd and Center Streets.

Operational History

Prior to the 1960s, the AMCO Chemical Site (Site) was used by a variety of businesses including an Anheuser Busch Store House (around 1911), a bottle and rag dealer (around 1931), and Walter Cole Tank Works (around 1951).

From the 1960s to 1989, the Site was owned and operated by AMCO as a chemical distribution facility. Bulk chemicals were off-loaded from a rail spur onsite and stored in drums and storage tanks before being transferred to smaller containers for resale. Bulk chemical storage facilities included 12 aboveground tanks, two underground tanks, and numerous drums. The drums and tanks were removed from the Site in 1989.

AMCO facility buildings that remain on the property include an office, a warehouse, and small storage sheds. Historical buildings that no longer exist at the Site include an ice house, formerly located on the north side of the property, and a large shed, formerly located at the western edge of the property. The warehouse was used to store drums and for the transfer of chemicals into smaller containers. The ice house was used for drum storage.

From 1989 to 1998, DC Metals used the property, along with a few nearby properties on Center Street, as a scrap metals yard. DC Metals operations closed down in November 1998 and metal scrap was removed from the Site. The Site is currently leased to Cable Moore, Inc., and is used primarily for cable storage.



Cable spool storage at the AMCO Chemical Site

Project History

Concern about environmental conditions at and near the Site arose in June 1995 when utility workers encountered strong chemical odors while digging in the area. Preliminary sampling at the Site and on 3rd Street, south of the Site, indicated the presence of **vinyl chloride** and other **chlorinated solvents** in soil, **soil gas**, and **groundwater**. We first became aware of the Site in 1996 when the California Department of Toxic Substances Control requested our assistance. We began a **preliminary assessment** of the contamination by sampling soil gas at the Site and determined that a response to remove the contamination was necessary. Our **Emergency Response Program (ERP)** moved in quickly to set up a system to remove the contaminants from the groundwater and soil gas (vapors in the soil). In February 1997, we began operating a **treatment system** to remove vinyl chloride-contaminated groundwater and soil vapors. This treatment system was a dual-phase groundwater and vapor



Thermal Oxidation Treatment System 1997-1998

extraction system with a thermal oxidation treatment unit. The system operated until July 1998, when we turned it off in response to community concern over potential exposure to contaminants from the system's exhaust stack.

During the installation and operation of the treatment system, we were able to gain additional information about the source and nature of the contamination. Based on this information, we determined that the Site did not pose an immediate threat to the public, but did pose a potential long-term risk. Therefore, the Site was removed from the ERP, and the process of evaluating a long-term solution, through the **Remedial Program**, was begun.

To verify that residents near the Site were not at risk from the contamination, we sampled the soil and groundwater at the Site, and the air from the crawlspaces of several adjacent homes. Sampling took place in December 1998, September 1999, and April 2000.

High levels of vinyl chloride and other chemicals were found in soil and groundwater at and near the Site (*see further discussion of vinyl chloride in Appendix E – Vinyl Chloride and ATSDR*). In the September 1999 sampling, very low levels of vinyl chloride were found in crawlspace air at homes next to the Site, and in soil gas at one home. However, vinyl chloride was not found in the crawlspace or soil gas of the homes during previous or later sampling. Based on the available information, we do not believe that the very low levels of vinyl chloride found in 1999 could affect the health of people living in those homes. The findings of these investigations are summarized in detail in a **Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (PA/SI)** report, which can be found at the Site repositories.

Additional sampling of groundwater, soil gas, and residential crawlspace air was

Project Repositories

West Oakland Public Library

1801 Adeline Street
Oakland, CA 94607
510-238-7352

U.S. EPA Superfund Records Center

75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
Call 1-800-231-3075 for an
appointment

conducted in August 2002 following the PA/SI. The results of this sampling event, which indicated no detectable levels of vinyl chloride in any of the two crawl-spaces or four backyards where soil gas was sampled, are consistent with the results of the previous monitoring events. Sampling activities, referred to as Routine Site Monitoring, will be conducted periodically to verify that nearby residents are not being exposed to contamination.

Based on the high levels of contamination in groundwater and soil at the Site, EPA Region 9 recommended in January 2001 that the Site be added to the **National Priority List (NPL)** of federal **Superfund** sites. On April 30, 2003 the proposal to list the AMCO Chemical Site on the NPL was published in the **Federal Register**. This marked the start of a 60-day period for public comment on the proposed listing. Since we did not receive significant objections to the proposed listing, the Site was officially added to the NPL on September 29, 2003.

Now that the Site is officially listed, the next step is a full-scale investigation, called the **Remedial Investigation (RI)**. The RI will help us determine the full nature and extent of the contamination in and around the Site. Once the extent of the contamination is fully determined, we will explore options to address the contamination.

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Investigation History - Timeline

