AMCO Chemical Site (formerly DC Metals)

USEPA COMPLETES PRELIMINARY STUDIES

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9 • San Francisco, California • August 2002

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) has completed Preliminary Assessment and Site Investigation activities at the AMCO Chemical Site (formerly known as DC Metals). The purpose of these studies is to determine whether the site poses a risk to surrounding residents and whether the site meets the USEPA criteria for inclusion on the National Priorities List (NPL) of federal Superfund sites.

History of the Site

Vinyl chloride was found at the site in June 1995 when utility workers were digging in the area. USEPA began an assessment of the contamination in October 1995 and determined that although no residents were being exposed to vinyl chloride gas, a response to remove the contamination was necessary. In February 1997, USEPA began operating a treatment system to remove vinyl chloride contaminated groundwater and soil vapors. The system operated until July 31,1998 when USEPA turned it off in response to some community members and advocacy groups' concern about potential dioxin releases from the thermal oxidation portion of the system. Over the past four years, USEPA has been responding to community concerns and collecting site data ultimately leading to the completion of the PA/SI. USEPA is now entering into a phase of full-scale investigation. Once the site is fully characterized, USEPA will explore options for remediation (clean-up activities). The community will be involved throughout the process.

AMCO Chemical Site Open House / Informational Meeting

Thursday, August 29, 2002
6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
West Oakland Multiservice Center
1801 Adeline Street, Oakland

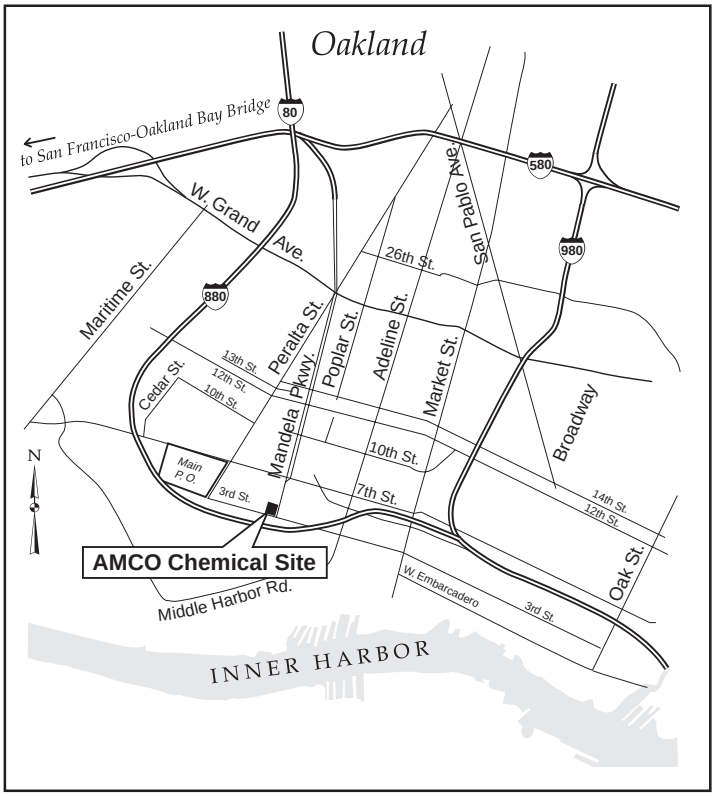
What did the USEPA studies find?

• High levels of vinyl chloride and other chemicals (fully described in the next section) were found in soil on the AMCO property. The entire site, including the area of contaminated soil, is covered with concrete, which prevents contaminants from reaching the surface. This layer, also known as a concrete pad, prevents people from coming into contact with contaminants at the site.

• High levels of vinyl chloride and other chemicals were found in shallow groundwater monitoring wells on and near the AMCO site. It is important to note that the groundwater in the AMCO area is not used for drinking water and there are no drinking water wells within four miles of the site.

• Very low levels of vinyl chloride were found in crawlspace air and soil gas at nearby homes in September 1999. However, vinyl chloride was not found in either soil gas or crawlspace air in sampling conducted in April 2000. The USEPA does not expect that the very low levels of vinyl chloride found in 1999 could affect the health of people living in the homes where samples were collected.

Location of AMCO Chemical Site



What chemicals were found at the site and what are the potential health effects?

Although the community is not exposed to contamination at the AMCO Chemical Site, it is still important for everyone to be knowledgeable of what sort of chemicals exist at the site. **Please remember that the community is not drinking the groundwater from beneath this site and that the contaminated soil and soil gas is contained under cement.**

Most of the chemicals we have studied on site fall into a few broad categories. One group includes chemicals we would find in gas, diesel, or other petroleum products. Examples of these chemicals are benzene, ethyl benzene, toluene, and xylenes. The primary route of exposure to these chemicals is inhalation. Of these chemicals, benzene is a carcinogen (cancer-causing agent). Benzene, toluene, and xylenes are found at the site at levels higher than USEPA Region 9 recommended levels for residential and industrial soils.

Documents Available

You can review the full Preliminary Assessment/Site Investigation (PA/SI) document at the West Oakland Branch Library or at the Superfund Records Center in San Francisco. Contact information for each location can be found on the back page of this fact sheet. You may also order a copy of the document from the Superfund Records Center, however a copying fee may be assessed.

Another group of chemicals found at the site is chlorinated solvents. These chemicals are often used in industrial processes to clean dirt and grease from machinery and clothes. Examples of these chemicals are tetrachloroethene (PCE), trichloroethene (TCE), methylene chloride and 2-butanone (MEK). Of these chemicals only TCE is present at levels greater than USEPA Region 9 recommended levels.

The majority of the other chemicals on site are breakdown products of chemicals in the other two groups. Of these chemicals, 1,4-dichlorobenzene, 1,1-dichloroethene, cis-1,2-dichloroethene, and vinyl chloride are present at levels higher than EPA Region 9 recommended levels.

Vinyl chloride is a colorless, flammable gas at normal temperatures with a mild, sweet odor. It is a manufactured substance that is used to make polyvinyl chloride (PVC). PVC is used to make a variety of plastic products, including pipes, wire and cable coatings, and furniture upholstery. High levels of vinyl chloride were found in soil and groundwater at the site. **Vinyl chloride has been identified as a "toxic air contaminant" by the California Air Resources Board and is recognized as capable of causing cancer by a number of health agencies, including USEPA.**

What Happens Next?

- Based on the data from the initial assessment and investigation of the AMCO site, the USEPA has proposed to add the AMCO site to the National Priority List (NPL) of federal Superfund sites. If accepted to the NPL, AMCO will become an official Superfund site.

• The next phase of field investigation activities (the Remedial Investigation) will start this calendar year *(see graphic - "Superfund Process at AMCO Chemical Site")*. In this phase, the extent of groundwater contamination will be determined. Once the data gathering is complete, USEPA will propose different methods of addressing the contamination. The community will be involved in the eventual selection of the most appropriate method(s).

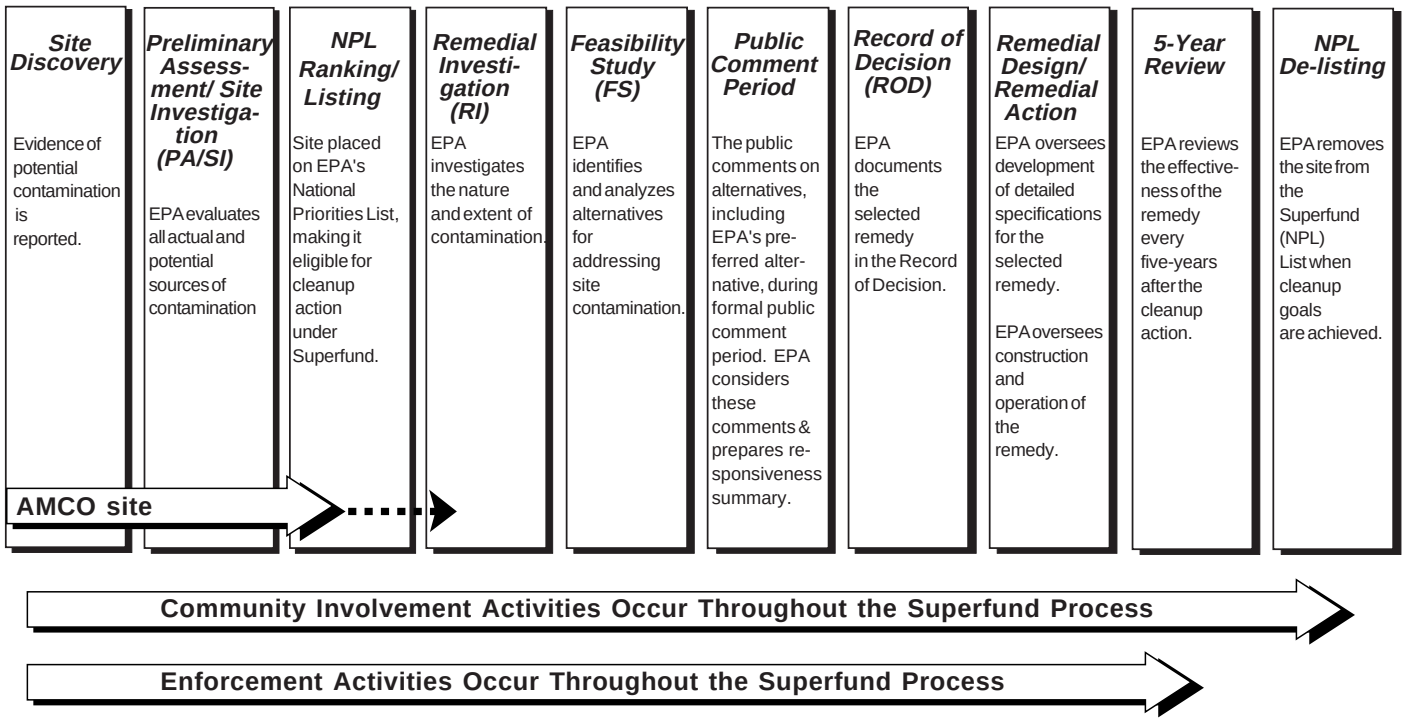
• USEPA will continue to monitor the site and nearby residences to ensure contamination does not pose a risk to the community. The next monitoring activities will take place in early fall. Information gathered from the monitoring will also be used in the Remedial Investigation.

• Community outreach activities will occur throughout this process. USEPA will work with community members to organize informational public meetings and other forums. Later this fall, USEPA will conduct community interviews for use in the creation of a Community Involvement Plan for the AMCO site. The plan will describe the community's feelings, wishes and plans for the site, as well as describe the best way for USEPA to work with community members. If community members express interest, USEPA can also assist in setting up a Community Advisory Board to advise the agency on site related matters. If the site gets placed on the National Priority List (becoming a Superfund site), the community will become eligible for a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG). A TAG is used to hire independent technical advisors to interpret site-related information for the community.

Opportunities for Community Involvement

If you are interested in participating in community interviews for the Community Involvement Plan for the AMCO Chemical Site or would like to discuss other community involvement activities, please contact Wenona Wilson, USEPA Community Involvement Coordinator. Please see the back page of this fact sheet for her contact information.

Superfund Process at AMCO Chemical Site



For More Information

If you have any questions or concerns about the AMCO Chemical site, please write, e-mail or call:

Wenona Wilson
Community Involvement Coordinator
USEPA Region 9 (SFD-3)
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
wilson.wenona@epa.gov
(415) 972-3239 or
leave a toll-free message at: **(800) 231-3075**

Information Repository

You can review USEPA reports, including the PA/SI Report or earlier fact sheets about the AMCO Chemical site (formerly known as DC Metals) at the following library locations:

West Oakland Branch Library
1801 Adeline St.
Oakland, CA 94608
(510) 238-7352

Superfund Records Center
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 536-2000

Printed on 30% Postconsumer Recycled / Recyclable Paper

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
75 Hawthorne Street (SFD-3)
San Francisco, CA 94105
Attn: Wenona Wilson

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