AMCO Chemical Superfund Site

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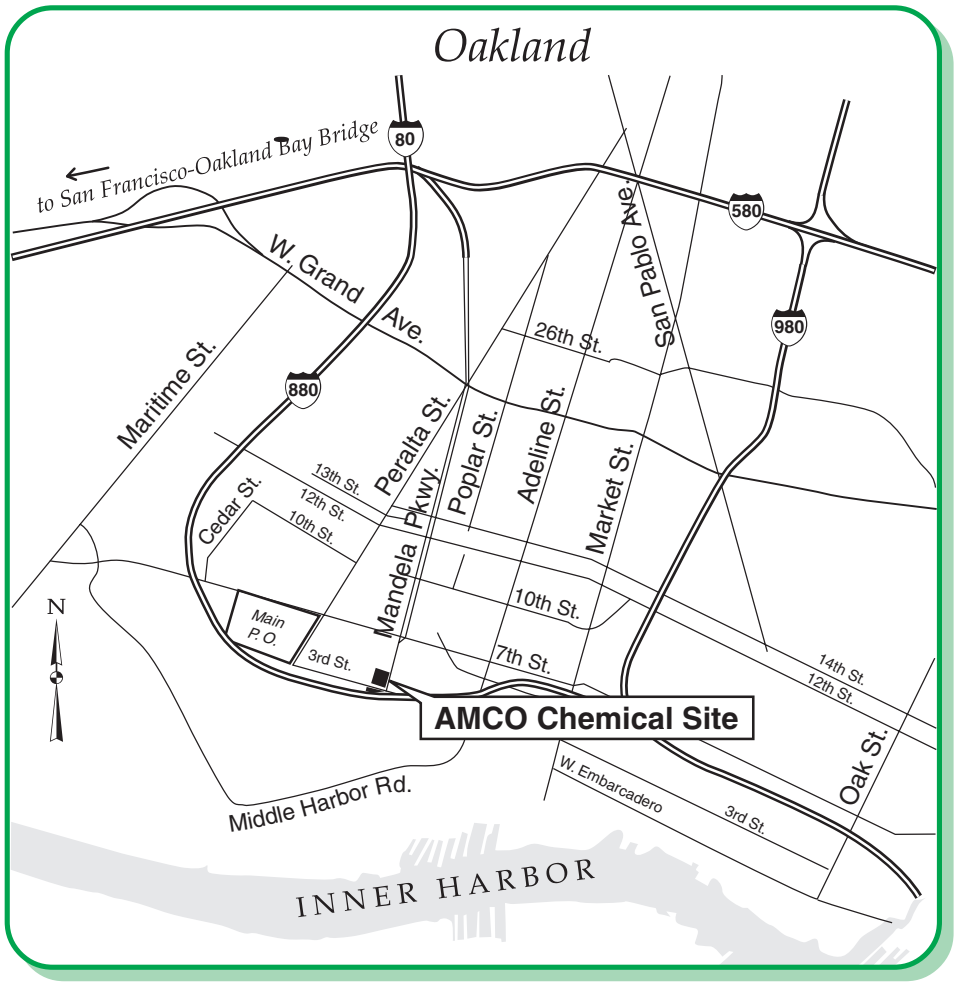
Remedial Investigation (RI) Update

The Site

The AMCO Chemical **Superfund** Site (see definitions of **bold** terms in glossary on page 4) is located in South Prescott, a residential neighborhood located in the "West Oakland" area of the City of Oakland. The Site, located one and a half miles southwest of downtown, is bordered by residences, industrial property, and land that may be redeveloped for mixed residential and commercial use.

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing for nearly 29 years, the AMCO Chemical Company offloaded chemicals from a rail spur on site, stored them in drums and storage tanks and then transferred them to smaller containers for resale. Chemicals handled at the former facility are those found in diesel fuel and dry cleaning, industrial cleaning and degreasing agents. All containers were removed and AMCO ended its operation in 1989, when DC Metals acquired the property and paved the facility with concrete. DC Metals conducted scrap metals operations on the AMCO block from the 1960s throughout the1990s.

Soil and groundwater beneath the former AMCO facility are contaminated from historical releases and await a decision on **remediation**.



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The former AMCO facility itself does not currently pose a threat to the public because the facility is paved, and the **groundwater** in the area is not being used as a drinking water source.

EPA is evaluating potential health risks associated with contamination that has migrated away from the Site, including the potential for groundwater contaminated with volatile organic compounds **(VOCs)** from the Site to affect air quality on adjacent residential properties. Most of the air sampling results have been below screening levels (see box). EPA is continuing to collect samples and evaluate whether there is any potential risk associated with long-term exposure. EPA also collected soil and produce

samples from adjacent properties to evaluate those potential exposure pathways. The residential soil sampling work is discussed in more detail below.

EPA is completing a Draft **Remedial Investigation (RI)** Report which will present the data EPA has collected on the nature and extent of the contamination at the Site. To date, the RI for the AMCO Site has cost approximately $3 Million.

What Has Been Done So Far?

Data have been collected and evaluated to determine the nature and extent of contamination associated with the former facility

EPA has collected enough data to determine the nature and extent of contamination in the groundwater and soil beneath the former facility. Around 90 chemicals in the groundwater and 40 chemicals in soil beneath the former AMCO facility exceed screening levels. These chemicals include **chlorinated solvents**, **benzene**-based chemicals, petroleum products, pesticides and **metals**.

Additional data have been collected at residential properties adjacent to the former facility

EPA also collected soil and produce samples in the yards of residences next to the former AMCO facility fence line (on Center and Third streets). The samples were tested for VOCs, metals and pesticides. Lead was detected at high concentrations in a limited number of soil samples. The levels in the shallow and deep soil samples range from 26.2 to 53,000 milligrams/kilogram (mg/kg). Some of these levels are well above levels that would be considered safe for residential exposure, particularly for children. Urban soils typically have lead levels of about 500 mg/kg. In Oakland, naturally occurring lead level for native soil is 14 mg/kg. EPA has determined that a **removal action** is warranted to remove high levels of lead that may pose a risk to residents.

What's Next?

EPA will complete the Draft Remedial Investigation Report to determine what degree of remediation may be necessary

EPA is preparing the Draft RI report. In the report we will present an evaluation of the nature and extent of the contamination from the AMCO Site. The report will be used as the basis for developing and evaluating alternatives to address the contamination at the Site. As part of the RI, we are preparing a risk assessment that estimates the current and future health risks from the Site. The RI field work at the Site began in September of 2004. Field work was completed in 2006. EPA will have the annual public meeting in the fall to present the results of the remedial investigation.

What are Screening Levels?

Screening levels are specific concentrations of chemicals that are considered by U.S. EPA to be health protective for human populations (including sensitive groups). Sampling results are compared to screening levels to determine if further assessment is needed. Screening levels are developed using toxicity values for each chemical and the assumption that children and other sensitive members of the community could be exposed to the chemical for at least 30 years (long-term exposure).

Screening levels are designed to be very protective of human health. If a contaminant concentration is below the screening level, then no action is necessary. If a contaminant is present at a concentration above the screening level, it does not necessarily mean that this chemical poses a significant health risk. However, further evaluation of possible exposure to that contaminant may be needed.

Health effects that could occur after only a very short exposure of hours or days (short-term exposure) typically develop only in response to much higher exposure concentrations than the screening levels.

EPA will excavate lead contaminated soil

After extensive community outreach and discussions with the impacted residents, and after considering different options, EPA has decided to conduct a removal action by excavating lead-contaminated soil from up to six residences next to the former AMCO property. An EPA **On-scene Coordinator (OSC)** will be in charge of these activities.

During all excavation activities, EPA will incorporate the best possible environmental controls to minimize dust and closely monitor air emissions. The excavated contaminated soil will be sent to an off-site disposal facility. EPA will backfill the excavated areas with clean soil and restore the areas.

Removal activities may begin as early as mid-July and take approximately two weeks to complete. **Activities will occur from 8 am to 5 pm weekdays. As necessary, flagmen will be used to control traffic on the corner of Third Street and Mandela Parkway.**

The Importance of Community Participation

The remedial investigation and the removal activities are being conducted under EPA's Superfund authorities. This program places a high value on public input and makes the community involvement opportunities a regular and integrated part of the activities. Results of our investigation will be communicated in a timely manner to the affected and interested community through fact sheets, websites and small group community meetings. We encourage the public to contact us at any time with questions or concerns about this project.

We Want You To Take Action And Get Involved!

- Attend the neighborhood meetings and public meetings
- Sign up to be added to the mailing list to receive updates
- Read the fact sheets and flyers
- Visit the Information Repositories
- Go to U.S. EPA's Web page for the AMCO site at: http://www.epa.gov/region9/AMCO
- Contact the U.S. EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, Viola Cooper at (415) 972-3243 or the toll-free message line at (800) 231-3075 if you have questions or concerns.

Glossary

Benzene: Industrial processes and motor vehicle exhaust are the main sources of benzene. Benzene is a gasoline compound and a general purpose solvent in coatings, cleaners and thinners. It is commonly found in the environment. Benzene is known to be a cancer-causing chemical when one is exposed to high enough concentrations for a long period of time.

Chlorinated solvents: Organic solvents containing chlorine [for example, **trichloroethene (TCE)** contains chlorine]. Chlorinated solvents are used in aerosol sprays, certain paints, and in dry cleaning fluids. Some chlorinated solvents, such as TCE, break down into other compounds such as vinyl chloride.

Groundwater: The supply of fresh water beneath the Earth's surface. Groundwater from wells and springs can be a major source of drinking water.

Metals: Metals are naturally-occurring compounds found in soil and may also be present in the environment from sources of pollution. For example, lead is a metal.

On-scene Coordinator: EPA employee who oversees removal actions.

Remedial Investigation (RI): Under the Superfund program, an RI is an action undertaken to characterize, through sampling the environment, the full nature and extent of contamination, including the evaluation of human health and ecological risks posed by the contamination.

Remediation: Cleanup action used to remove or contain a toxic spill or hazardous material at a contaminated site.

Removal action: Under the Superfund program, a removal is a short-term cleanup designed to protect the public from threats to human health or the environment. Removals may include activities such as collecting and analyzing samples and removing highly contaminated soils. Removals vary in urgency from emergencies (requiring action within hours), time-critical (requiring action within six months) to non-time critical (planning period of six months or more).

Superfund: The trust fund that provides for the cleanup of hazardous substances released into the environment, regardless of fault. The Superfund was established under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and subsequent amendments to CERCLA. The term Superfund also is used to refer to cleanup programs designed and conducted under CERCLA.

Trichloroethene (TCE): Solvent widely used in industry as a cleaning and degreasing agent. Results of animal studies conducted with high amounts show that TCE can damage the liver, kidneys, and nervous system, and cause cancer.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): Substances that evaporate readily at normal temperatures and pressures. VOCs at the AMCO Chemical Superfund Site include benzene, TCE, and chloroform.

What Is An Information Repository?

The Information Repository is one tool the public can use to learn about activities at AMCO. This is where you can find up-to-date information, technical reports and reference materials. Repositories are established for all Superfund sites where cleanup activities are expected to last for more than 45 days. Typical locations include public libraries or municipal offices.

The information repositories for the AMCO Site are located at:

West Oakland Public Library
1801 Adeline Street
Oakland, CA 94607
(510) 238-7352

U.S. EPA Region 9
Superfund Records Center
95 Hawthorne Street, 4th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
(415) 536-2000

Mailing List Coupon

To be included on EPA's AMCO Chemical site mailing list, please send the coupon below to Viola Cooper, Community Involvement Coordinator, U.S. EPA, 75 Hawthorne St. (SFD-3), San Francisco, CA 94105, or email the information to: cooper.viola@epa.gov

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City, State _____ Zip _____

Telephone (optional) _____

E-mail (optional) _____

Affiliation (optional) _____

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U.S. EPA's Web page for the AMCO site:
http://www.epa.gov/region9/AMCO

(800) 231-3075 Toll-Free Message Line

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