National Copper Products Well Sampling Continues

National Copper Products
Dowagiac, Michigan July 2006

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has been working with National Copper Products to develop a schedule for cleanup of ground-water contamination caused by the former Sundstrand Heat Transfer, now National Copper Products. Much of the ground water (underground water supplies) under the facility and west, north and northwest of the site is contaminated with trichloroethylene (TCE) and other chemicals.

EPA is currently reviewing a Corrective Action Monitoring Plan submitted by NCP under a corrective action order that was issued June 2. Under the corrective action order NCP will further investigate and clean up contamination under EPA supervision. NCP was carrying out some of this work even before the order was signed by EPA and NCP. Activities under way, planned and completed are described below:

Summer schedule under way

NCP will install three new multi-channel monitoring wells that will allow ground water sampling at different depths using the same well. This type of sampling will help scientists map the exact depths of polluted underground water. At sites agreed on by EPA and NCP, the company also will install temporary deep wells and place piezometers, which are used to measure ground water levels and quality.

Fall schedule

NCP with EPA's agreement has planned extensive ground water activities. NCP will sample all monitoring wells, purge wells and sparge wells as well as surface seeps that are fit to sample. The company will sample accessible private wells in Burmax Park and from the facility north along M-57 to the gun club. NCP will compare water contamination levels in wells and piezometers near purge wells to evaluate their effectiveness and submit this information and conclusions to EPA for review. EPA will also use these data to determine risks to human health and the environment. Information gathered this fall will also be used as the basis for additional cleanup activity and guidance on well closures.

Winter schedule

Before cold weather sets in, NCP proposes to collect a complete set of water contamination levels and sample any wells that were not accessible during the fall sampling. EPA is hoping the data will show that the extent of contamination has been defined. Discussions with NCP regarding cleanup and closure can then begin.

Availability sessions set

EPA will hold availability sessions – informal drop-in meetings – with representatives from EPA, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and National Copper Products on hand to answer your questions. The sessions will be 3-5 p.m. and 6:30-8 p.m. Tuesday, July 25, at Dowagiac City Hall, 214 S. Front St.

Information about the NCP site is at
Dowagiac Public Library
211 Commercial St.
or on the Internet:
epa.gov/reg5rcra/wptdiv/cars/cleanup

For more information:
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Persons who need special accommodations, such as a language signer, should contact Don de Blasio, at (800) 621-8431, ext. 64360, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. EDT weekdays.

Spring schedule completed

NCP completed its spring quarterly sample rounds of contamination levels in water. The sampling included analyzing spots on the surface where water seeps out from underground and checking water from wells sunk into aquifers. (An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock or other material such as gravel, sand, silt, or clay from which ground water can be extracted.) The water was also tested from purge wells that use high-speed pumps to remove contaminants and from several sparge wells, which inject air into the underground water to remove TCE and other pollutants. (NCP has not been placing those quarterly results at the library because of the volume of material. The company did not want to overwhelm the library's storage space.) Anyone interested in the reports may request them from EPA's Jill Groboski at the address on page 1.

Indoor Air Sampling and Results

Last January, the company selected some homes to sample indoor air to determine whether vapors from TCE and other contaminants in the ground water were entering residences. The selected homes were based on soil gas monitoring results from June 2005. EPA is reviewing the report NCP submitted in May. A letter explaining the results of the indoor air sampling will be sent to residents whose homes were sampled within the next month.

Background

In 1982, TCE was discovered in drinking water wells of the Sunstrand facility (now NCP). The TCE was from a leaking underground storage tank. After this was discovered, a survey of residential wells next to the facility was done and it was discovered the residential drinking water wells were contaminated with TCE as well. Residents were connected to public drinking water and further studies were done. In addition, a legal agreement called a Consent Judgment was signed between the state of Michigan and Sunstrand to install and operate a pump and treat system to clean the ground water. In 2005, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality requested EPA take over the site to help move the environmental cleanup forward. Negotiations on a consent order between NCP and EPA began in 2004 and the order was signed this June.