

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

October 2007

Union Pacific / Omaha Convention [Qwest] Center

Facility Name: Union Pacific / Omaha Convention [Qwest] Center

RCRA Status: Interim Status. Cleaned up under RCRA Section 3008(h)
Administrative Order on Consent between EPA and UPRR

Implementing Agency: EPA Region 7

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Short Summary:

The Union Pacific Railroad Omaha Shops Facility (UUPRR), a 210 acre interim status RCRA facility, was part of a series of contaminated properties along the Omaha Riverfront. In 1994, the City of Omaha approached Union Pacific and several other properties on the Omaha Riverfront about voluntarily cleaning up their properties, as part of a greater riverfront revitalization effort. The Union Pacific facility then entered the Nebraska Voluntary Cleanup Program. EPA Region 7 later began negotiations with UPRR for a RCRA Section 3008(h) Administrative Order on Consent resulting in a final order being issued February 29, 2000.

A parcel of about 100 acres was cleaned up to non-residential risk based standards. Lead contaminated soil from this parcel was consolidated into an onsite soil repository. Other contaminated soil was disposed of off-site. Covenants were put in place restricting the type of use for the property, as well as existing zoning ordinances. When remediation of the parcel was completed, the parcel was sold to the City of Omaha as the location for the Qwest Center, a \$290 million Arena and Convention Center with close to 1 million square feet. Opening in 2003, this facility has been highly successful, consistently ranking in the top 20 in ticket sales in the world, which is a major feat for a secondary market like Omaha.

Other portions of the original property are being cleaned up and being considered for redevelopment as well.

Background:

The facility encompasses approximately 210 acres and is just west of the Missouri River. UUPRR used the facility for approximately 100 years, with its

principle functions as a railroad fueling facility, repair shop, paint shop and body repair shop for the locomotive and car fleet. From the 1950s to the 1988, the facility was a major overhaul and maintenance facility. Maintenance and repair activities involved various hazardous substances, principally paints, paint solvents, caustic cleaning chemicals and degreasing solvents. Some of the wastes generated from these activities were disposed of on-site, resulting in contamination of soil and ground water. In 1988, most of the operations moved out of state. Demolition of the facility began after operations were moved off-site.

Remediation:

The RCRA Facility Assessment was completed in June 1998. 32 solid waste management units (SWMUs) and 18 Areas of Contamination (AOCs) were identified for a RCRA Facility Investigation. The Order divided the site into two operable units for soil contamination – one for the area to be used for the Qwest Center and one for the remainder of the property. A third operable unit would address all contaminated groundwater. A Corrective Measures Study (CMS) was prepared for the operable unit for the Qwest Center. Excavation of the contamination followed by on-site disposal was selected as the corrective measure, providing a balance of the selection factors of long-term reliability and effectiveness, reduction of toxicity, mobility or volume of waste, shorter-term effectiveness, implementability and cost. The part of the site used for disposal of excavated soil became part of a new embankment for the connection between two streets.

UPRR has completed the RCRA Facility Investigation (RFI) and CMS for the remaining soil operable unit and for contaminated groundwater. EPA Region 7 selected corrective measures in September 2007. The corrective measures require excavation of soil above non-residential health-based cleanup levels for offsite disposal. Natural attenuation would be used to remediate remaining groundwater contamination. Vapor intrusion mitigation measures would be required for buildings where contaminated groundwater may adversely impact indoor air quality. Contingent corrective measures were selected to allow for redevelopment projects to include residential components. Long-term monitoring is being used to determine the effectiveness of all the corrective measures.

Because there was waste left in place, there are covenants on the property restricting the type of use, prohibiting use as a day care, preschool, playground, athletic field, picnic ground, dormitory, or nursing home. The covenants prohibit treatment, storage, or disposal of hazardous waste on the premises. Any excavation of the soil must comply with the Excavation Management Plan on record. The covenants also prohibit the drilling of wells with the exception of monitoring wells and temporary dewatering wells. A City ordinance prohibits installation of drinking water wells without approval of the health department.

Revitalization

The site was divided up by operating units to facilitate redevelopment. EPA designated the approximately 100 acres, which has become the Qwest Center, as one operable unit (Operable Unit No. 1) to accelerate the cleanup so construction could begin. EPA later modified the corrective measures in Operable Unit No. 1 for additional cleanup to allow for a residential component for the Saddle Creek Records development. EPA also used Nebraska's Uniform Environmental Covenants Act to provide suitable restrictions on another parcel, not part of Operable Unit No. 1, sold by UPRR where two hotels will be constructed. Other areas of the property are also being considered for revitalization which may include residential components.

The Qwest center has served as the cornerstone for the overall \$1 billion riverfront revitalization project, including hotels, condominiums, restaurants and other development. The Qwest Center itself is a \$290 million Arena and Convention Center with close to 1 million square feet of space. The Center opened in 2003 and has been highly successful, consistently ranking in the top 20 in ticket sales in the world, which is a major feat for a secondary market like Omaha.