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U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Waste Site Cleanup & Reuse in New England

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Superfund Records Center

SITE: Centredak

BREAK: 17-7

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GREEN HILL ROAD (20)

Johnston, Rhode Island

Providence County

Street Address: 20 Green Hill Road

Zip Code: 02919

Congressional District(s): 02

EPA ID #: RIN000103195

Site ID #: 0103195

Site Alias:



SDMS DocID

506561

Description

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According to the Johnston, RI tax maps, the property in question is plat 31, plot 37 and the street address is believed to be 20 Green Hill Road (Latitude and Longitude: 41E47.97 N, 71E31.60 W respectively). The once forested 21.12 acre property was clear cut and probably excavated below grade to provide ample room for the huge pile of construction & demolition (C&D) debris brought to the site. The pile is estimated to be approximately 120' deep at its highest point. The site is located off of Green Hill Road which connects Plainfield Pike (Route 14) and Shun Pike. Green Hill Road is an extremely busy 2 lane road which supports the Central Landfill and numerous waste hauling and other businesses. The site is bounded to the north by partially wooded property, a portion of the Upper Simmons Reservoir, Shun Pike and the Central Landfill.; west by Green Hill Road and the New England Ecological Development (NEED) Landfill; south by an open lot and businesses including the town of Johnston Department of Public Works (DPW); and east by the Upper Simmons Reservoir, a water body used for flood control purposes, and a number of businesses. There is also an operating electric power plant to the northeast.

The DEM investigated the property at 20 Green Hill Road in February, 1999 and observed approximately 350,000 yd3 of shredded C&D debris. The material was/is considered solid waste and was generated at the NEED transfer station/wood recovery

facility at 23 Green Hill Road. The 20 Green Hill Road property was never licenced or registered to operate as a solid waste management or composting facility and therefore, DEM issued a Notice of Violation (NOV) letter to the owner, Mr. Vinagro, also the owner of NEED. Mr. Vinagro requested a hearing at the DEM Administrative Adjudication Division which is still pending. NEED had been a licenced facility at one time, but due to a number of outstanding violations and a major fire which destroyed the facility's transfer station during the summer of 2002, the DEM rescinded the licence. On September 26, 2002, the Providence County Superior Court placed the NEED facility into permanent receivership.

In October 2002, the RI Department of Environmental Management (DEM) requested EPA for technical assistance including air monitoring/sampling to confirm the presence of hydrogen sulfide gas believed to be emanating from the New England Ecological Development (NEED) landfill, which recently had its permit revoked by the DEM. This landfill contains greater than two million cubic yards of debris and consists of shredded wood (regular and pressure treated), plastic, metal, wire, insulation material, etc. Also in October, the DEM Emergency Response Section received a call that a portion of the property on the other side of Green Hill Road was on fire and the Johnston Fire Department was on-scene. The property, known as Plat 31, Plot 37 and believed to be 20 Green Hill Road is another C&D debris landfill. This landfill was never licenced or permitted and is owned by the same owner, Mr. Louis Vinagro, Jr., as the NEED landfill at 23 Green Hill Road. The debris at 20 Green Hill Road was reportedly illegally transported from the NEED facility and is believed to be in excess of one million cubic yards.

In November 2002, EPA and DEM conducted air sampling at the site. A health consultation from the Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) stated that the on-going fire did not currently represent a health threat to the off-site residences but on-site conditions did represent unsafe conditions and a potential health threat to the workers, responders, and any personnel who might wander onto the site. They also state that they believe site access should be restricted and that efforts be undertaken to mitigate the conditions which currently exist on-site and which are the underlying cause of the contaminant levels which have been detected. Also, the DEM Office of Air Resources determined that four substances detected in the smoke exceed ATSDR and EPA acute health thresholds and numerous other pollutants are of concern. A thermal infrared photographic flyover of the site in November 2002 showed that the landfill was smoldering and there were severely elevated temperatures in a number of locations throughout the pile.

In December 2002, EPA, DEM, and the town of Johnston appeared before a judge in the Rhode Island Superior Court in Providence. The purpose of this meeting was to attempt to have the judge allocate funds currently held by the receivership for the NEED landfill, as

NEED and the Green Hill Road Site are owned by the same individual. After reviewing the EPA prepared site work plan with the associated cost estimates, the judge ordered the receivership to forward approximately \$140,000 to the DEM to carry out the work plan. Items specified in the plan included: bringing in an appropriate cover material and spreading it out over portions of the landfill to cut off the oxygen supply, providing better access into and around the landfill, creating a non-combustible staging area for equipment, personnel and potentially smoldering debris, and a firewall trench dug into the landfill to segregate known hot spots. By the beginning of February, 2003, DEM and their contractor had completed their work at the site. As of the preparation of this Action Memorandum, the DEM has not yet been reimbursed by the receivership as ordered by the judge and have exhausted the vast majority of their emergency response fund. On February 14, DEM notified EPA that a portion of the landfill had again broken out in flames. This was the same area that had contained the known hot spot and had been segregated by the trenching operation during DEM's site activities. DEM stated that they would be able to stamp out the flames, contain the area, and check on it over the weekend, but they did not have the resources to continue past that point.

According to both state and local officials, the continuing responses to the ongoing situation has dissipated their resources and neither the town or state can afford much additional emergency response expense. The site is continuing to smolder and just recently again combusted at the surface. The DEM has exhausted the additional funding provided by the receivership and has again asked for EPA assistance. DEM is planning on reappearing before the judge to ask for additional funds via the receivership, but it is unknown if there are any additional funds in the receivership, and if there are, if the judge will allocate them to DEM.

In February 2003, EPA signed an Action Memorandum authorizing a short term cleanup (a Time-Critical Removal Action) at the site.

Current Status

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The DEM and their contractor have recently completed substantial amounts of work at the site. Utilizing their emergency response budget, DEM has created better access around the site, cleared areas for staging, dug a deep firewall trench around a known hotspot, had large amounts of a silty material delivered to the site and spread it to an approximate 2' thickness over portions of the landfill, and regraded the landfill as necessary. DEM is still awaiting payment from the receivership as ordered by the Superior Court Judge. Thermal monitoring of the landfill has been and will be one important component of applying cover material to the pile. EPA has subcontracted the drilling and installation of well casings in strategic locations throughout the landfill in which thermocouples will be

lowered to record temperatures. This will provide meaningful information, including the movement of the subsurface fire(s) and the proper locations to lay down additional soil cover material. Three of the wells run the full depth of the landfill and an additional twelve have been installed at approximate fifteen foot depths and placed towards the perimeter.

Originally, the Johnston Fire Department and the DEM had been addressing the flame and smoke breakouts by covering those areas with soil cover and forcing the soil into the sinkholes caused by the burning and decomposing debris and installing firewall trenches to contain a known hotspot. EPA will consider augmenting the earlier efforts by the Fire Department and DEM by creating additional firewalls and/or stockpiling additional soil cover material on-site and applying it as necessary. In the event or the threat of a major breakout, the soil will be readily available to apply to the pile in larger quantities. It is possible that the stockpile may have to be augmented with substantial amounts of cover material from off-site sources to address the area(s) of concern. Other actions will be considered as well, including separating and removing the large hotspot that is currently contained with firewall trenches and apparently still smoldering and/or the use of inert gases to displace and cut off oxygen to the fire.

Photos

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