Associated Press Financial Wire January 11, 2008

More tests on toxic underground plume in Southern Tier town

State health and environmental officials will conduct another round of testing for signs of hazardous chemicals flowing in the ground below homes in Endicott.

The area includes more than 12 blocks of residential and commercial property near a former Canada Dry bottling plant. Officials declined Thursday to say how many structures would be tested, or when, until residents in the area are notified. Letters were mailed from Albany on Wednesday, said Lori O'Connell, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

A public meeting is scheduled for Jan. 23 at Union-Endicott High School to discuss the plans, she said.

Samples collected outside homes last summer gave scientists a more complete picture of a subterranean plume of trichloroethylene (TCE) in the ground and penetrating into homes as a toxic vapor. To date, TCE vapors have affected more than 700 properties, mostly in Endicott and the town of Union near a former IBM Corp. Click for Enhanced Coverage Linking Searchesmanufacturing site.

The vapors were first detected in 2003. Exposure to TCE, a metal cleaning solvent, has been linked to illnesses ranging from kidney cancer to brain damage.

Collecting samples inside and under homes this winter will determine whether the vapors are moving through foundations and collecting in buildings through a process called vapor intrusion. Scientists will use the data to "determine whether actions are needed to address exposure," according to the mailing to residents.

Last week, a group of 94 residents and businesses filed a lawsuit against IBM over more than $100 million in claims they say are linked to the TCE pollution from the company's former microelectronics plant in Endicott. Lawyers said it was the first in a series of lawsuits that will eventually include 1,000 plaintiffs.

The state Department of Health has documented higher rates of certain cancers and heart defects in the area, although health officials have been unable to pinpoint a cause for the illnesses.

The Ithaca Journal January 24, 2008

Emerson: TCE in air near homes

ITHACA Ambient outside air near some South Hill homes shows the highest levels of TCE that have been found since Emerson began testing ambient air in 2004, according to a letter from Emerson Power Transmission to some homeowners.

"In November 2007, indoor air testing was conducted in a number of structures and concurrent ambient air samples were collected in the vicinity of the structures. The results of that sampling were unexpected; trichloroethylene (TCE) and certain other VOCs were detected at elevated concentrations in the ambient air samples above what EPT has previously found. This is the first time TCE has been detected at these concentrations in ambient air samples since EPT began testing for ambient air in the fall of 2004," the letter states.

Dave Baldridge, Emerson spokesman, said the TCE levels detected in outside ambient air ranged from 1.2 to 29.5 micrograms per cubic meter.

The detections were found near "homes undergoing post-mitigation monitoring or homes that had previously been tested where follow-up monitoring was occurring," he said.

The finding raises the question about the impact of mitigation systems installed in homes to pull contaminants out from under basement sub-slabs and pump them outside.

In response to the findings, Emerson agreed to "provide a work plan to assess the actual mass emission rates of target compounds from vent stacks of selected mitigation systems and evaluate the potential for air impacts from the operation of mitigation systems," according to the letter.

Emerson's letter also notes that while its testing found high TCE levels in outside air, similar tests conducted by the state Department of Environmental Conservation found no or very low concentrations.

Diane Carlton, regional DEC spokeswoman, said by e-mail, "Our monthly DEC tests for ambient air have been non-detect for TCE, with the exception of one sample in which TCE was detected at a very low level."

Baldridge said the sampling procedures, collection canisters and analytical methods for the DEC and Emerson ambient air testing is the same. Emerson uses different labs, but both labs are state-certified, he said.

Emerson and DEC samples were taken "in close proximity" to each other, he said.

Specific homeowners whose homes showed high TCE levels have been notified individually, Baldridge said.

Because of privacy laws, Emerson does not make results from testing of private homes public.

The letter was provided to The Journal by Ken Deschere, a South Hill homeowner and member of a state vapor intrusion alliance.

He said the state should establish and enforce a consistent and more protective standard for mitigation in homes with TCE detection. Required TCE mitigation levels vary by state.

New York's indoor mitigation standard is five micrograms per cubic meter, he said.

Emerson, "to their credit," voluntarily mitigates homes at 0.8, Deschere said, but even this isn't much comfort "if you live with 0.7."

Long-term exposure to high levels of TCE shows an association with certain types of cancer, including kidney, liver, esophagus and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, according to a fact sheet provided by the state Department of Health.

"But for those of us who've been exposed to presumably lower levels for 10-15 years, they don't know what the effects are," Deschere said. "The idea is to err on the side of caution. But that's expensive and it's not something the state has gotten around to."

Walter Hang, environmental activist and president of Toxics Targeting, said the "fundamental problem is this site has never been fully investigated from top to bottom," primarily because companies such as Emerson, National Cash Register, Ithaca College and, on the other side of town, Ithaca Gun, never filed full disclosure reports about past dumping practices, so state agencies and the public don't even know where to begin looking.

"How many times are we gonna go through this cycle?" Hang said. "This is not a naturally occurring compound that you would normally find in ambient air. It's not coming out of cars, it's not coming out of lawnmowers, it's not coming out of snowblowers, it's associated with industrial activity.

"In a very densely developed residential neighborhood with a school across the street? This investigation should have been done 20 years ago," he said.

Many of the homes in the affected area are rentals and there is no state law requiring owners to tell tenants about testing results in or near their homes.

Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton, D-125th, has co-sponsored bills with Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, D-126th, to require such reporting, but they have been vetoed twice, once by Gov. George Pataki and once by Gov. Eliot Spitzer.

Mike Kennerknecht, Lupardo's chief of staff, said Lupardo's office is working with the governor's office and Lupardo intends to re-introduce the bill again this year, with Lifton as a co-sponsor.

States News Service January 29, 2008

EPA AND NCDENR PROVIDE SAMPLING RESULTS FOR MILLS GAP GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION SITE IN SKYLAND, N.C.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources (NCDENR) announced the results today of a sampling investigation of 66 residential wells within a one-mile radius of the former CTS Corporation Click for Enhanced Coverage Linking Searchesplant on Mills Gap Road in Skyland, N.C. NCDENR conducted the sampling under a cooperative agreement with EPA.

Of the 66 wells sampled, one active well showed the presence of Trichloroethylene (TCE) in excess of EPA's Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL), the level established to be protective of human health. The well is located approximately three-fourths of a mile northeast of the site. The sampling also detected trace quantities of cis-1,2-Dichlorethylene, a breakdown product of TCE, below the MCL. EPA provided bottled water to the affected residence and re-tested the well in question. The second set of sampling confirmed the presence of TCE at the level indicated by the original testing.

NCDENR also identified all active residential wells in the immediate area of the contaminated well. On January 8, 2008, NCDENR tested eight wells not previously tested during the November and December sampling events. Of the eight wells, one well, located immediately east of the contaminated well, contained TCE below the MCL. No contaminants were detected in the other five wells.

Further sampling is necessary to determine if the contaminated wells are related to the former CTS plant on Mills Gap Road. NCDENR will conduct additional sampling during the week of January 28, 2008.

NOTE: EPA will host a public meeting to discuss the activities at the Mills Gap Groundwater Contamination site on Thursday, January 31, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Skyland Fire Department at 9 Miller Road in Asheville, N.C. EPA, NCDENR, Buncombe County Health Center, and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will be available to answer questions about the residential well sampling, as well as other issues concerning the site including recent soil sampling, surface water sampling, and a vapor intrusion study.

Press & Sun-Bulletin February 7, 2008

240 sign on to lawsuit against IBM over TCE

A second wave of legal claims seeking damages from IBM Corp. Click for Enhanced Coverage Linking Searchesrelated to pollution in Endicott has been filed in state Supreme Court in Binghamton, bringing the total to more than 240 plaintiffs, with more on the way.

The 82-page document representing 151 property owners and residents was filed electronically late Friday afternoon by Philip Johnson, an attorney with the Vestal law firm of Levene Gouldin & Thompson. Johnson is part of a team of seven law firms

representing more than 1,000 clients in the massive toxic tort case against IBM seeking more than $100 million in damages for a range of hardships related to the pollution. They include cancer and other illnesses, property devaluation, loss of business, medical expenses and related monitoring, and hassles of dealing with the pollution.

The first wave of claims, representing 94 plaintiffs, was filed early last month.

The plaintiffs' attorneys are organizing clients into about six groups, each representing a cross section of claims. This allows them to proceed to trial independently and makes the case more manageable, Johnson said. The plaintiffs also filed for a hearing with a judge, a process that typically takes four to six weeks, he said.

The claims stem from a subterranean plume of trichloroethylene (TCE) creating vapors that wafted into homes and businesses near the sprawling North Street plant, now owned by Huron Real Estate Associates. Exposure to the chemical is linked to illnesses ranging from cancer to brain damage, but the amount posing calculable risks is debatable.

Michael Maloney, an IBM spokesman, said last month and again Wednesday that the claims are without merit and the company will "defend itself vigorously."

Plaintiffs' attorneys "completely disagree" with IBM's assessment, Johnson said. "That's what lawsuits are for."

Julia and John Dinga who lived over a polluted section of the village on Tracy Street for 49 years are named with their family of five children in the recent filing. Julia Dinga was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2000. The couple's children, including former Assemblyman Jay Dinga, also are named in the case as having increased health risks from chemical exposure requiring medical monitoring.

Julia Dinga worked for IBM for eight years and John Dinga for nearly 35 years. IBM loyalty still runs deep in the community, Julia Dinga said. Many former workers hold IBM pensions and stock.

"I know there are so many people who hate to talk against IBM, and I do, too," she said. "But it (the pollution and its consequences) happened, and it's not a secret. I don't see how they feel they are not responsible."

The plaintiffs' attorneys began signing up clients in 2003, soon after the discovery by state health and environmental officials that a subterranean plume of industrial solvents dating prior to 1979 had been forming fumes and entering buildings through a process called vapor intrusion.

A three-year effort to reach a settlement came to an unsuccessful end in November 2007.

The Ithaca Journal February 14, 2008

TCE tests find high levels in court lobby, police sheds

ITHACA Contaminant testing at the city police department, courthouse and storage buildings show low levels that require no further monitoring at the police station, and higher levels that prompted additional testing in the courthouse lobby and the police storage sheds.

The most problematic reading was in the ambient outside air "collected in the vicinity of the sheds" and the courthouse, according to letters from Emerson to Ithaca Mayor Carolyn Peterson dated Jan. 22.

The tests were conducted last November, the same time that testing of ambient air outside some South Hill homes detected trichloroethene or TCE at very high levels.

The TCE level detected in ambient air near the sheds and the courthouse was 14.7 micrograms per cubic meter.

The state Department of Health guideline that requires mitigation to prevent health impacts is 5 micrograms per cubic meter in indoor air. There is no guideline for outdoor air because it's so unusual to detect TCE in outdoor air.

In the November tests, consultants for Emerson Power Transmission found high levels of TCE in eight ambient outdoor air samples in the South Hill neighborhood north and downhill from the factory, including the sample near the courthouse.

Emerson's predecessor, Morse Chain, used metal degreasers containing TCE and other volatile organic compounds that are now considered likely carcinogens.

Outdoor air sampling carried out monthly by the state Department of Environmental Conservation, including at the same time Emerson took its samples, found no or very low TCE levels.

The unusually high ambient air readings and the fact that Emerson's tests came back so different from the DEC results prompted quick re-tests.

Dave Baldridge, spokesman for Emerson, said by e-mail Tuesday that all follow-up testing in the South Hill neighborhood, at the courthouse and in the police storage sheds was completed last week.

Tests results normally take a month or more to be processed and validated.

Indoor air collected in the courthouse lobby contained TCE at 5.41 micrograms per cubic meter just above the state action threshold. Emerson voluntarily mitigates homes with TCE readings at or above 0.8. The test also found methylene chloride at 20.5 micrograms per cubic meter. The health department action guideline is 60 micrograms per cubic meter.

At the police department storage sheds on East Clinton Street, Emerson's consultants tested sheds 2 and 4 and found relatively low contaminant levels, except for the ambient air readings.

Indoor air in shed 2 found methylene chloride at 2.65 micrograms per cubic meter and TCE at 0.546. In shed 4's indoor air, methylene chloride was found at 7.45, tetrachloroethene, also known as PERC or PCE, was found at 1.24, and TCE was detected at 0.983.

The letters from Emerson to Peterson were obtained by Ken Deschere, a South Hill resident and member of a state vapor intrusion alliance, and provided to The Journal.

Peterson said she saw the letter Jan. 25 and gave a copy to Acting Police Chief Ed Vallely.

Vallely could not be reached for comment Tuesday or Wednesday.

Jeff Huddle, president of Ithaca's Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents Ithaca's police officers, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

Jim Jecen, chief clerk of the Ithaca City Court, said Wednesday he had never been given a copy of the test results.

Dayton Daily News February 22, 2008

Efforts aim to rid Dayton homes of hazardous vapors; Basement systems installed to clear air of degreaser, with some success.

DAYTON - Efforts to make homes safe from contaminated groundwater fumes near the Behr Dayton Thermal Products plant, 1600 Webster St., have run into problems at as many as 10 homes.

And the effort to clean indoor air contamination at a nearby school is ongoing, authorities have said.

The problems are caused by how some of the older homes were constructed. The homes have been equipped, under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency supervision, with air evacuation systems that are used to ventilate fumes caused by trichloroethylene or TCE, a degreaser.

TCE fumes have migrated from the soil into the homes, businesses and schools, creating potentially hazardous vapors.

In homes that have dirt basement floors, those floors must be sealed for the air evacuation systems to work properly, said Mark Case, director of environmental health for Public Health Dayton & Montgomery County.

Most of the problem homes are on streets closest to the plant, south of the property line. Some are on Daniel Street and a couple are on Milburn Avenue, Case said.

Gaining access to the homes for the construction work has been occasionally difficult, he noted. Still, Case said, the systems have come close to meeting the long-term environmental exposure limits.

The exposure limit from the Ohio Department of Health is four-tenths of a part per billion of TCE vapor, based on the notion that someone would live in a house around the clock for 30 years, Case said.

Numbers in the problem homes are fewer than 10 parts per billion "but higher than they should be for longterm comfort," Case said. If numbers were 2,000 parts per billion, an evacuation of the dwellings would be required, he noted. "We are well below that," Case said, and efforts to correct the issues will continue.

Steve Renninger, U.S. EPA's onscene coordinator, said close to 100 homes have had systems installed. And in the vast majority of those, the systems have been successful.

The U.S. EPA is continuing to test homes in the area, he said.

The systems are sampled after 30 days and then after 90 days to see if they are working correctly, he said. Most meet indoor air levels within 30 days. Other systems have to be adjusted to meet required levels, he said.

Former Behr plant owner Chrysler is continuing efforts to clean the contaminated groundwater that is at the root of the problems. The cleanup will likely be a long-term effort, Case said, and there's no time line for when the cleanup will be completed.

Renninger said Chrysler contractors had installed 11 systems at Van Cleve at McGuffey School, at 1032 Webster St., by December but the indoor air levels are still too high. The school was closed in August.

"They've not yet achieved the screening levels," he said. "They'll continue to monitor the system that was installed. It will take time to lower the levels."

Press & Sun-Bulletin February 27, 2008

TCE vapors a concern at plaza

VESTAL More work to block vapors from underground pollution is needed in a plaza on the Vestal Parkway occupied by a fitness center and several businesses, based on recent tests by state environmental officials.

Additionally, officials from the state Department of Environmental Conservation are seeking permission to collect samples by March 31 from five more properties to the northwest, in the area of King and Birch streets. The tests are needed to see whether indoor air is being tainted by trichloroethylene (TCE) fumes coming from under the plaza at 1808 Vestal Parkway.

The site, which houses American Family Fitness, was converted from Hidden Valley Electronics, which made electrical components from the mid-1960s until 1995.

DEC officials plan a public meeting on the status of the site and future plans. The time and date will likely be determined by next week, said Maureen Wren, a DEC spokeswoman.

The eastern part of the plaza, which contains much of the fitness center, was fitted with a system preventing fumes from penetrating the foundation, according to information from the DEC. But more work is needed on the western half, which contains part of the fitness center and several businesses, including an insurance agency, a tuxedo shop and a sports shop.

Brian Andrulewich, owner of American Family Fitness, said Monday the system under the fitness center was installed as a safeguard, and it is tested routinely. "We're clean," he said.

The pollution's impact on the plaza is not the only concern. The subterranean chemical plume flows from the site in a northwesterly direction for about a half-mile under the Parkway and a pedestrian trail to a neighborhood of single-family homes on and near King Street. State officials have recommended systems to block vapors at 15 homes in the neighborhood, with 13 property owners accepting the offer and two declining, DEC spokeswoman Lori O'Connell said.

The News Journal February 28, 2008

EPA to assess risks of toxic vapors

Federal pollution investigators will dispatch a mobile laboratory to Dover this spring as part of an expanded probe of toxic vapor risks from chemical contamination in ground water flowing under the state's capital.

The Environmental Protection Agency work will target pollutants spilled into the soil from a former coal gas plant and dry cleaning operation west of the city center.

Studies of the Dover Gas Light Co. Superfund site have been under way since the mid-1980s. More than a decade later, officials acknowledged concern that vapors from some of the contaminants might trickle into buildings after escaping from shallow, tainted ground water.

The EPA and DNREC will provide details about the project to the public from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday at DNREC's Richardson and Robbins Building headquarters, 89 Kings Highway.

Part of the work scheduled for this spring includes use of a mobile Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer bus to sample vapors under the bottom slabs of buildings along the contamination plume.

The TAGA samples can be drawn from a small hole drilled into the floor of buildings, in a process that takes about 30 minutes. Some indoor air sampling work also is planned, using small, portable devices that collect samples over a 24-hour period.

About 40 properties will be checked initially, said Roy Seneca, a spokesman for the EPA's regional office in Philadelphia.

A company hired by parties responsible for the pollution concluded that soil vapors "did not pose an unacceptable risk," Seneca said.

But subsequent ground water tests led investigators to seek additional vapor checks.

"We've identified various contaminants in shallow ground water," Seneca said. "When you have that, there's always the potential for vapor intrusion."

Past studies found plumes of toxic hydrocarbons and dry-cleaning solvents extending beneath parts of The Green and some nearby homes and offices, with contaminants potentially escaping into the St. Jones River south of Legislative Hall, more than a quarter mile from the original spill sites.

Although public water supplies are considered safe from the pollution, past tests have found shallow ground water contamination levels in worst-hit areas thousands of times higher than federal drinking water standards.

Chemicals most often mentioned include tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene, solvents used in dry cleaning that are known to cause cancer or other health problems after long-term exposure at high levels.

State and federal officials plan to contact property owners in areas chosen for the study.

The EPA and DNREC announced a $4.6 million, multi-party settlement on cleanup costs in 2003.

States News Service March 12, 2008

ST. LOUIS PARK, MINN., VAPOR INTRUSION STUDY UPDATE MEETING MARCH 19

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 will host a public meeting to update residents on findings of the vapor intrusion study being conducted in the vicinity of

Highway 7 and Wooddale Avenue. The meeting will be 7 p.m., Wednesday, March 19 at the St. Louis Park Rec Center, 3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, Minn.

Vapors from volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, have been found in some area ground water and could get into homes and commercial buildings. EPA has screened about 250 St. Louis Park properties since December. A Web site is at http://www.epa.gov/region5/sites/stlouispark/index.htm

Officials from partner agencies are expected at the meeting. Partner agencies include Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Public Health, Hennepin County and the city of St. Louis Park.

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle March 12, 2008

Site's cleanup draws little interest

Barring a flood of public comments, state environmental officials could decide early next month on a cleanup option for a site in northeast Rochester where soil and groundwater are contaminated with toxic solvents.

And judging by attendance at a public meeting on the site Tuesday evening, a flood of further comments is unlikely. "It's sad in the neighborhood there's just no interest," said Sue Buehner, one of two or three citizens who attended the meeting in the library at School 36.

The session focused on problems at 42 Fernwood Ave., a small commercial building where Preferred Electric Motors reconditioned motors from the early 1950s until the business closed eight years ago. In the process, the company spilled or dumped toxic solvents, including trichloroethene, or TCE.

After an anonymous tip about leaking chemical drums in 2000, state Department of Environmental Conservation officials found solvents in soil and groundwater.

They also discovered very high levels of TCE vapors infiltrating a neighboring rental home, and health officials ordered that it remain unoccupied until a system was installed to pull the potentially harmful vapors from the soil.

The DEC paid for removal of soil and an underground storage tank in 2001. In more recent years, state officials returned to the area to test a dozen structures for vapors, and installed a ventilation system in one home.

Now the agency has proposed a permanent cleanup that would involve removal of more tainted soil, capping that area with asphalt, cleaning the building's floor and placing material underground that would promote degradation of the remaining solvents.

The work would cost $1.1 million. "It blows my mind that they're going to spend $1 million to do what they're going to do," said Buehner, whose home abuts Preferred Electric's former property.

During the session, she asked DEC and state Department of Health officials several questions about how much contact they've had with residents since the contamination was found.

"We tried to inform the surrounding community as best we could," responded Melissa Menetti, a public health specialist.

After the meeting, Buehner said she was pleased that so many experts about 10 were present to answer questions. She and her husband John, who also attended, said they were assured Tuesday that their home would be tested for TCE vapors next year.

A formal cleanup decision likely will be made in April, said Valerie Woodward, the DEC project manager. Work would start in one to two years.

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle March 22, 2008

Store near Victor to be tested for TCE

FARMINGTON Tests for vapors contaminated with the toxic solvent trichloroethene will be taken on the property of Wade's Market Center this spring.

The tests will determine whether there is a need to take air samples inside the grocery, said Todd Caffoe, an environmental engineer with the regional office of the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

"At this time we don't know if there are impacts on the store," said Caffoe. The concern, he said, would be that TCE vapors from groundwater underneath the store might seep into the building.

John Wade, owner of this popular food market on the south side of Route 96 near the Farmington-Victor border, did not return calls for comment.

State Health Department officials, Caffoe said, will decide whether to seek air samples after reviewing the vapor samples taken from metal tubes placed into the ground on the Wade's property.

Groundwater contaminated with TCE was identified on Wade's property about 15 years ago and originated from the Griffin Technology plant on the north side of Route 96, across the street from Wade's. Diebold Inc., Griffin's parent company, is responsible for the tests because of a consent order with DEC.

DEC officials will hold a public meeting Wednesday evening at the Farmington Town Hall about new plans to clean up the Griffin site that could help address the problem at Wade's. Information about the contamination at Griffin was made public in September 1996. At the time, it was believed that only groundwater had been affected, and since the area is supplied with public water, it was not vulnerable to the TCE contamination.

A mobile home park nearby is not believed to be affected.

Although monitor wells have been in place at Wade's since the mid-1990s, only in recent years has the DEC begun to focus on the potential dangers from the vapors of contaminants.

{}Groundwater tests

TCE, once widely used for metal degreasing and other purposes, can harm the central nervous, immune and reproductive systems, impair fetal development and cause cancer in people exposed to sufficient quantities.

Vapor intrusion is a phenomenon in which chemical vapors can rise from underground contamination and accumulate in buildings.

A pocket of Victor, known as the plume, has been in the spotlight much of the past year because of TCE contamination of groundwater. Vapor intrusion needing remedial action has been found in six homes in western Victor, where the DEC continues to investigate the groundwater contamination.

State regulations consider acceptable levels of TCE in groundwater at up to 5 parts per billion, or about the amount of an eyedropper in a swimming pool, Caffoe said. Testing wells on Wade's property, sampled last July, found that TCE concentrations near Route 96 were 110 parts per billion and 85 parts per billion, said Caffoe.

Concentrations in the parking lot in front of the store were not tested. However, test wells behind the store showed concentrations of 6.2 parts per billion and 2.6 parts per billion.

Property just east of Wade's is believed to be the only other area now affected by the plume from the Griffin contamination; last July it had TCE levels of 55 and 37 parts per billion.

Griffin Technology, which closed its Farmington plant in 1995, has since become a subsidiary of Diebold, based in North Canton, Ohio.

{}Cleanup efforts

S&W Redevelopment of North America, a Syracuse-based firm that specializes in re-using brownfields, bought the Griffin site from Diebold in September.

From the mid-1990s until the end of last year, a pump-and-treat operation on the grounds of the site was done in an attempt to cleanse the groundwater.

"We have found no evidence of a risk to human health due to site-related contaminants at the former Griffin Technology," said state Health Department spokesman Jeffrey Hammond.

But more cleanup would be needed if the now vacant property were to be re-used.

S&W, which plans to put businesses and offices at the Griffin site, wants to inject oxidizing agents into the contaminated groundwater so that the TCE breaks down into harmless components, said Terence Maliga, a manager for S&W.

That should also reduce the contaminants in the groundwater under Wade's property.

Griffin Technology, which made laminated identification cards, apparently used the TCE to clean machinery and, according to the DEC, disposed of almost three-quarters of a ton of TCE by dumping on its grounds between 1977 and 1986.

Officials learned of the contamination after a questionnaire was sent to companies across the state in the mid-1980s asking how they handled waste.

States News Service April 9, 2008

EPA ANNOUNCES SOIL VAPOR INTRUSION STUDY IN SAN ANTONIO

The following information was released by the office of Texas Rep. Charles A. Gonzalez:

Last night, the Environmental Protection Agency announced to the former Kelly AFB Restoration Advisory Board that they are scheduled to conduct a soil vapor intrusion study in a neighborhood next to the former Air Force Base in San Antonio. The EPA is launching the study to address public concerns about the air quality in the area.

The EPA has scheduled its two part study to begin on May 12, 2008 and will specifically focus on an area neighborhood that has high off base concentrations of ground water pollutants. Their results will allow the EPA to determine the source of any potential air contamination that could be found over the course of the study. The EPA will also use their findings to determine if a pathway exists for potentially discovered contaminants to enter the air that is inhaled by local residents.

The EPA also announced that they would use their Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) buses for a phase of the study. The TAGA is a technologically advanced mobile laboratory that can produce continuous, real-time sampling and analysis of the air it tests.

Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20), who called for the investigation in November of 2007, issued the following statement applauding the EPA's announcement:

"I welcome this announcement and applaud the Environmental Protection Agency's efforts on this issue. I'm especially pleased that the EPA granted my request to bring their Trace Atmospheric Gas Analyzer (TAGA) to San Antonio for the purpose of this testing. This unit represents the most advanced technology available for this type of study and San Antonio residents deserve no less. My office will be working with the EPA to identify area residents that will volunteer to have their homes tested and I'm optimistic that together we can move forward in a timely fashion so that the EPA's study can proceed as scheduled."

Press & Sun-Bulletin May 4, 2008

TCE testing expands at Union site

Monitoring wells added at country club

UNION Technicians tracking the flow of pollution from a former chemical burn pit on Robinson Hill Road are installing monitoring wells on Binghamton Country Club property. Test results are expected later this year or early 2009.

Contractors for IBM Corp. Click for Enhanced Coverage Linking Searchesbegan work in April and will continue installing wells and collecting samples throughout the year, said Michael Maloney, an IBM spokesman. The work, so far limited to a remote wooded area on the north side of the country club, is being done to determine the extent of a TCE plume traveling from company property to the south.

Drilling rigs in the woods could be seen recently from the backyards of homes on Sky Lane Terrace. That prompted questions from some residents who didn't know about the project, organized and funded by IBM and overseen by the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

June Elavsky, who lives on Frazier Road, overheard friends talking about it. She attended a public meeting Tuesday in Endicott with the expectation of learning more, but the meeting dealt mostly with pollution-related projects funded by the state in other parts of the Town of Union.

"I have faith that IBM is doing a fair job," she said. "But I still have lots of questions."

The main question how far does the pollution go and what is its impact will have to wait until a report IBM is expected to issue later this year or early next year following completion of field work.

In 1980, IBM cleaned the site, also used as a shooting range and laboratory, by excavating 10,000 cubic yards of tainted soil and hauling it to a secure landfill near Niagara Falls.

A DEC evaluation in 1986 concluded the cleanup satisfied regulations. However, the state reopened the investigation in 2003, after scientists found widespread TCE pollution in Endicott where it was entering buildings through a process called vapor intrusion.

Exposure to the chemical has been linked to illnesses, including brain damage, organ failure and cancer. In 2003, state health officials established exposure guidelines from vapor intrusion that advocates say are too lax.

Press & Sun-Bulletin May 18, 2008

TCE: A SPECIAL REPORT; TOXIC INTRUDER

In 2003, when tests showed unacceptable levels of trichloroethylene in houses south of the IBM plant in Endicott, the company began venting properties affected by vapor intrusion. Over the past five years, TCE plumes have been discovered across the county. Here are seven TCE hot spots.

JUNE STREET AREA

In January, state scientists began testing 80 homes in the area outlined below, after TCE was found at 312 Maple St., site of an old electronics factory, and a former Canada Dry bottling plant. Results of the tests are pending, with more testing possible. The area contains about 400 properties.

WESTERN ENDICOTT

The IBM investigation in 2003 also found pollution west of Jefferson Avenue.

But the company said it was not responsible for the problem, leaving the investigation to the state and taxpayers. So far, more than 50 properties within the Town of Union, many in the orange area below [UTF8]E280B9[/UTF8] have been tested.

Venting was required at 14 of the properties because of high TCE levels.

IBM ENDICOTT

After IBM sold the site to Huron Real Estate Associates, IBM contractors tested hundreds of homes and businesses in a polluted area to the south, outlined in orange. They found solvents leaching from under the microelectronics factory contaminated more than 480 properties. The company installed systems to remove the chemicals beneath the foundations of more than 450 buildings. Some properties do not have the systems for various reasons, including structural problems or lack of the owners¹ cooperation.

FORMER HIDDEN VALLEY

In 2005, officials began testing pollution at a former microelectronics site on Vestal Parkway. They found vapor intrusion was affecting the building and homes in a

residential neighborhood to the north. Officials tested more than 60 homes and three businesses in the area, and installed systems where they found high TCE concentrations collecting below foundations at 13 homes and American Family Fitness Center.

AMERICAN CLEANERS

A former dry cleaning building was demolished and contaminated soil was removed from the site in 2007. One nearby home was fitted with a system to prevent chemicals from entering, and others are being monitored.

ASHLAND CHEMICAL

In 2005, Ashland Chemical began testing nearby homes to determine whether vapor intrusion from the site [UTF8]E280B9[/UTF8] a hazardous waste transfer station [UTF8]E280B9[/UTF8] was reaching homes on Smith Avenue. They found air in three homes on the east side of the street tested positive for traces of TCE. The company installed systems on affected homes and are continuing to monitor properties in the area.

HILLCREST

Officials began investigating a polluted section of Hillcrest in 2003. Over the course of the next five years, they found more than 110 properties in the study area, outlined in orange, that needed systems to remove contamination. They are continuing to test others. TCE pollution has been documented at two factories in the middle of the neighborhood: the former CAE Link factory, now occupied by Elliott Manufacturing, and the former Triple Cities Metal Finishing plant, which is vacant.

Whittier Daily News June 23, 2008

Toxic site cleanup set

WHITTIER - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials say they are preparing to clean up hazardous waste at the site of Skateland Park and Omega Chemical Corp.

The EPA will listen to comments from community members and lay out its plans to clean up the area near the intersection of Whittier and Washington boulevards from 7 to 9 p.m. today at the Whittier Community Center, 7630 Washington Ave.

"We'll talk about the proposed plan, we'll talk about the preferred alternative and we'll take any questions," Remedial Project Manager Christopher Lichens said about the EPA's reasons for the meeting. "Maybe the most import reason is to take comments."

The soil and groundwater at the site were contaminated by Omega, which accepted hazardous waste from 1976 to 1991. Tons of the waste ended up in the ground underneath the site, eventually leaching into underground water sources, Lichens said.

Ultimately, Skateland was demolished when owners were faced with the high cost of installing ventilation systems to keep the building safe from toxic vapors.

The new owners of the Skateland property, the Omega Chemical Site Potentially Responsible Party Organized Group, or OPOG, will pay the about $5.6 million in cleanup costs for the site over a five-year treatment process.

Lichens said the waste in the soil will be discussed at the meeting. The EPA will submit its "preferred alternative" for getting rid of the pollution, which is to dig wells from which toxic vapors can be pumped. If left alone, those vapors can be carcinogenic if they seep into nearby buildings and remain there for long periods of time. Over a period of 25 to 30 years, Lichens said, "vapor intrusion" into buildings could pose a threat.

The process of removing the vapor should be unobtrusive, Lichens said, and the chemicals pose no threat in the short-term.

The Record June 23, 2008

DuPont's new mess frustrates residents; Toxic vapors found in Pompton Lakes

When Denise and David Murray of Colfax Avenue in Pompton Lakes heard about the new DuPont pollution, they immediately thought, "Here we go again!"

"We raised three children who played soccer in that soil for years, and we're very frightened," said Denise.

On nearby Cedar Street, Jamil Aburomi was upset about the depreciation of his house, one of up to 350 homes with chemical vapors contaminating the soil below them. "I've put a lot of money in my house, but who is going to want to buy it?"

Tests last month in a neighborhood near DuPont's former explosives plant found elevated levels of hazardous vapors emanating from groundwater pollution that is a legacy of the factory's 92 years of operation. The discovery of the contamination comes on the heels of DuPont's ongoing $130 million efforts to clean the area of mercury, lead and solvents.

Weary from the first cleanup, residents see this latest revelation as another disruption to their lives.

"The new findings are icing on the cake," said Councilwoman Lisa Riggiola, who was raised and lives on Orchard Street in the area above the plume of contaminated groundwater.

"Residents are angry and wonder why they are paying the same amount in taxes [with the pollution]."

DuPont tested under seven homes for soil vapors last month at the direction of the state Department of Environmental Protection. Elevated levels of chemical vapors were found under five homes, prompting wider testing of the neighborhood, which is in the northeast corner of town between the former plant and Pompton Lake.

The chemicals are tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE), which were used as degreasing agents. Both are listed by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry as probable human carcinogens.

DuPont's legacy in Pompton Lakes is more than pollution, however. DuPont built a portion of the community, DuPont Village; was long its largest employer; and remains the borough's largest property taxpayer, by far. Although most of its buildings are gone, it paid more than $800,000 in 2007.

"Since they [DuPont] signed a consent order to clean up [in 1988], they have been totally compliant," said Ed Merrill, environmental officer for the town. "There's never been a delay in cleaning up or restoration after the cleanup. And they've always been completely available to any of my requests for information."

The company, the DEP and local officials moved quickly to deal with the situation after the contamination was found. Last week, Mayor Katie Cole and DuPont sent out 469 letters to homeowners in the so-called "plume" area of contamination and its borders asking them to answer questionnaires.

Among the queries was whether the resident wanted his home first tested for the vapors or wanted DuPont to immediately install a protective vapor mitigation system, a device similar to the pipe vents used to eliminate radon contamination. The offer of immediate installation of venting systems goes beyond what DEP requires now, but the systems might eventually be necessary in some cases anyway.

As of Friday, DuPont reported, 216 residents had responded.

"The initial work plan [submitted for approval of the DEP] is for the testing of soil vapors beneath 10 homes identified as having samples that showed potential for vapor mitigation into the home," Bob Nelson, public affairs manager for DuPont, said Friday. "Three of those homeowners chose not to have any testing done [inside their homes]. We have received results from indoor air sampling in one of the homes that showed no detection of TCE or PCE. We have received no new reports from our certified lab. "

DuPont's earlier cleanup efforts have included pumping and treating a plume of groundwater contaminated with industrial solvents that stretches from the plant site under several residential blocks.

Testing by DuPont in 1985 found several private wells polluted with solvents at levels a federal agency concluded could damage vital organs and increase the risk of cancer for

people who drank the water. DuPont connected affected residences to the municipal water system.

Informational meetings are planned for today and July 2.

"Our primary goal is to communicate with those residents who have concern about what's going on with this soil vapor intrusion situation we're dealing with now," said Nelson.

That won't be easy with residents living above the plume. Count Regina Sisco of Park Place among them.

"I feel betrayed," Sisco said. "I feel a lot of people aren't telling the truth, and I'm worried about my house. Who is going to want to buy it? I blame DuPont for this black cloud that hangs over our town."

The Southampton Press

Scientists urge residents living above toxic plume to contact the governor

Nearly 100 people turned out for a meeting of the Speonk-Remsenburg Civic Association on June 25, a week after a presentation by state officials on a toxic plume in Speonk left many of them with more questions than answers.

At the meeting on Wednesday, three hydrogeologists who are also members of the civic association and have been studying the pollution on their own, answered residents' questions about the plume. It is believed to be at least 1.5 miles in length and is contaminated with four toxic cleaning solvents. Many residents who attended the earlier presentation, held by the State Department of Environmental Conservation and the State Department of Health, said they felt that their questions had been inadequately addressed.

Among the questions posed to state officials was how to speed up the process of remediation at the site, which extends from the west side of Speonk-Riverhead Road down to North Phillips Avenue, crossing both Old Country Road and Montauk Highway. State officials mostly shrugged and reminded the residents that the state cleanup process is a long one.

This week, though, the scientists—who live in Speonk—urged those residents to write to Governor David Paterson asking that the cleanup be expedited. The DEC has already spent seven years investigating the plume, and DEC representatives said two weeks ago that it could take several more years to put a remediation plan in place.

"Who do we go to to have it be a priority? It's the governor," said hydrogeologist Rich Baldwin. Mr. Baldwin and fellow hydrogeologists Stephanie Davis, his wife, and Bob Mozer, a former civic association president, have been looking into ways to speed along the cleanup process ever since the DEC meeting.

Though many at this week's meeting wanted to see the federal government take an interest in the project, the scientists cautioned that the state might be the best agency to handle the problem.

"You don't want it to be an EPA site," Mr. Baldwin told the crowd, referring to the federal Environmental Protection Agency. "You think the DEC is slow?"

"It's important for all of us to pressure the state to go ahead," agreed Southampton Town Board member Chris Nuzzi, who attended the presentation.

Many residents wonder if the source of the contamination was the burial of solvents used by the U.S. military during World War II. The scientists believe that the chemicals were likely dumped at the end of the war because one of the chemicals, carbon tetrachloride, was only used until the end of the war. Another, PCE, began to be used during the war.

"Carbon tetrachloride was used commonly at Gabreski during World War II," said Ms. Davis, referring to the Air National Guard base at Gabreski Airport. "Today, it would get disposed of as hazardous waste."

Resident Robert Caccavalla said he believed the chemicals, which evaporate easily, could have seeped into the groundwater only if they were buried in concentrated form.

"The only way they could make it into the ground is if they were buried in drums, and the only person who could do that was the military," he said.

Mr. Baldwin said, however, that the chemicals in the plume were used by "a lot of people" around the time the solvents were dumped into the ground.

Many residents were concerned that a former feather factory on North Phillips Avenue, or manufacturers working at other industrial buildings located above the the plume, could have all been dumping into the ground at the same time, though Ms. Davis said she doubted there was more than one source. "This plume has a very consistent signature," she said. "It has all the same chemicals in the same relative concentrations. That stuff looks like it all went in at the same place."

Resident Diane Renna said that she recently received a tip from someone who was alive during the war, who distinctly remembered the land north of the plume had been fenced off, and a sign for the BOMARC Missile Program had been placed on the fence. Her story is consistent with those of many others who were alive during the war, who said that the military had cordoned off the area between Old Country Road and Speonk-Riverhead Road and used it as a bombing range.

"If it ends up being the U.S. government [that's responsible], that's fine," said Mr. Baldwin.

"They have the money to solve the problem," shouted resident Ron Dennison.

Most residents were also concerned about the potential effect of the plume on their health and about what it will do when it reaches Moriches Bay.

Ms. Davis was quick to remind the crowd that she and the other scientists were experts on groundwater, not on human health. She explained to the crowd that there was no real way to stop the plume from continuing to flow, at a rate of between 3 and 6 inches per day, toward Moriches Bay.

The Record July 2, 2008

Toxic vapors worry council Pompton Lakes wants more soil tests

POMPTON LAKES - Several members of the Borough Council want to hire an independent consultant to test the soil outdoors and the basements of 350 homes for toxic vapors. And they want DuPont, the company responsible for the contamination, to pick up the tab.

"I strongly feel that it is a responsibility of the town for the health and welfare of the citizens living on the so-called 'plume' to hire an independent contractor to test inside and outside the homes," said Councilwoman Lisa Riggiola, who lives in the affected zone.

Meanwhile, two public information hearings are set for today and will include local, state, and DuPont representatives. at 3 and 7 p.m. at the Carnavale Center at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church on Lenox Avenue, across from Borough Hall.

On hand to answer questions will be officials from the borough and the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as well as DuPont representatives.

Tests in May in a neighborhood near DuPont's former explosives plant found elevated levels of hazardous vapors emanating from groundwater pollution that is a legacy of the factory's 92 years of operation.

Residents have voiced mistrust of the company, noting that this is a second round of contamination. DuPont is involved in an ongoing $130 million effort to clean the area of mercury, lead and solvents. Now the concern is that chemicals tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE), used to degrease machinery, have risen in vapors from the ground soil into homes.

Health risks and depreciation of their homes have residents living on the "plume" frustrated, scared, and angry. And others are concerned for them.

"We as a full council have no work plan to review," said Councilman Ed Meakem. "There is no dialogue whatsoever on the work plan, and that concerns me."

Another concern, he said, is that the "borough has a history of relying on the information provided by DuPont." DEP, he said, is taking findings from the company, too.

"When you have the fox watching the henhouse, which this is, it's hard to accept," Meakem said.

Bob Nelson, public affairs manager for DuPont operations, said Monday that "The council must act on behalf of their residents."

"However, we are doing the right thing here," Nelson said of DuPont's offer to test residential basements and install venting systems if the homeowners want.

"We've taken a proactive approach. we're consulting with contractors and experts who have first-hand experience with vapor intrusion, and we continue to reach out to residents and encourage them to work with us in addressing this current situation."

The Record July 3, 2008

Will values vaporize? Residents voice medical and financial concerns

POMPTON LAKES - Increasingly frustrated and demanding more detail, some 158 residents met Wednesday with borough, state and DuPont representatives about toxic vapors rising from groundwater beneath as many as 350 homes.

Health questions - how long the pollution has been there, and whether neighbors were experiencing contamination - were central to concerns residents voiced during afternoon and evening sessions. A DuPont representative said almost two dozen homes have been subjected to indoor vapor sampling, with results pending.

No indoor contamination has been officially reported.

The effect of the situation on home values also worried many residents.

"My next-door neighbor sold her house and moved to North Carolina," said Anne Klauser, who lives on Colfax Avenue, in the affected area. "They were supposed to have a closing June 20 but when news of the pollution came out, the guy backed out."

Addressing that concern, Mayor Katie Cole told residents local Realtors are being consulted by the borough.

And in a sign that homeowners may be contemplating legal action, a law partner of environmental attorney Robert F. Kennedy Jr. attended the meeting at the request of several residents.

DuPont, whose former explosives factory is responsible for the contamination in the northeast part of town, and state environmental staff are urging affected residents have their homes tested for vapors wafting through their foundations, and to take DuPont's offer to install, at company cost, a venting system similar to pipe vents used to eliminate radon contamination.

DuPont representatives said 70 homeowners have responded to a letter sent out by the company and the borough asking if they wanted to be scheduled for indoor testing and/or wanted a system installed even without testing. Last week, 22 homes had been sampled for indoor air, said Bob Nelson, public affairs manager for DuPont Operations. He said results of the tests were not yet available.

"Twelve [of the 22] wanted the system where DuPont people met with homeowners to design how the mitigation system would be installed," he said.

But even the offer of the venting system disturbed some residents.

Alessio Martino said he and his wife, Luisa, bought their house in October 2006.

"Now everybody is going to have these tubes hanging out of their houses," Martino said. "I just want a guarantee that nothing happens to the value of my house. It seems it's a fix to put in these systems for DuPont, but we're stuck with an ugly pipe coming out of our basements and in our yards."

Models of the system were on display as was literature about vapor intrusion, which officials said is still being researched as to the vapor's pathway and the potential health effects of the vapors of tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloromethylene (TCE). The chemicals were used as degreasing agents at the explosives manufacturing plant that operated in the borough from 1902 to 1994.

"We will be looking at indoor air levels to see if they pose any threat, both short term and long term," said Sharon Kubiak of the state Department of Health and Senior Services.

She said health officials would return to answer questions in August after collecting information.

The state Department of Environmental Protection issued guidelines for the testing for vapor intrusion on Dec. 31, 2005. DuPont officials said they discovered the contamination two months ago and have moved quickly with the DEP to protect residents.

"In recent years, we learned about soil gas vapors and this site was above our screening levels," said Len Romino, assistant director of the Site Remediation Program for the DEP. He said the DEP "strongly recommends testing and having the mitigation installed.

"Your home will be protected - you won't have to worry about vapors coming into it," he said.

Cole, the borough mayor, told the audience that borough officials are organizing a Realtor's group to gather information regarding residents' concerns over property values.

"Your home should be your safe place. I want to get it back there," Cole said.

Amelia Sorca, who lives on Jefferson Avenue, said she has done some research.

"My understanding is that these chemicals cannot be completely removed," she said. "I encourage my neighbors to get our own plan - what we would like to see," she said.

Meantime, Kevin Madonna, a New York-based law partner with Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said he attended the meeting at the request of residents.

"We're meeting with the residents and going over some documents," Madonna said Wednesday afternoon when asked if his firm will be representing any homeowners. "We'll know more in a few days."

Sorca won applause when she acknowledged that, although DuPont has taken action to protect residents, it is the source of the pollution.

"You are doing what you should be doing because you created the problem," she said to DuPont representatives. "What are you going to do to correct the black eye you have given the town?"

"We are stepping up to the plate and have been," said David Epps, project manager for DuPont. "We will look for ways to be a positive influence in Pompton Lakes."

St. Petersburg Times July 9, 2008

TESTS WILL SNIFF FOR TOXINS

State officials will sample air in homes above a polluted plume of underground water.

State health officials say it's all right to sprinkle lawns or fill swimming pools with irrigation well water from the Azalea neighborhood where toxic contamination from the Raytheon factory has spread.

But they're not so sure about breathing.

Next month the Florida Department of Health will begin testing the air inside the homes and apartments over the area with the most contamination to see if there are any toxic vapors.

In the meantime, state environmental regulators want Raytheon to produce a plan to start cleaning up the toxic contamination first discovered on its property 17 years ago.

"We hope this is something the community can take some comfort in," state Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Pamala Vazquez said Tuesday.

Azalea residents will get a chance to quiz Raytheon and state officials about the contamination and cleanup in a community meeting today at 6 p.m. at the Pasadena Community Church.

At that meeting, health officials will be looking for at least 10 people who would say yes to testing the air inside their homes or ground-floor apartments, said Gayle Guidash of the Pinellas County Health Department.

Health officials are concerned about the possibility of vapors from contaminants, now flowing toward Boca Ciega Bay, migrating up into houses, she said.

"If there's a crack in the foundation, there's a potential for volatile organic chemicals to intrude," Guidash said. "Then if the home is closed up, the residents can breath that in."

So health officials want to run 12-hour tests on the air in homes and apartments on property where the irrigation wells have already tested positive for contaminants from Raytheon, she said.

The water from those irrigation wells, however, does not pose a public health threat, health officials have determined. That's because the contamination level isn't high enough, and there are no obvious pathways for the contaminants to get into a human body since no one is drinking it.

"Even if you bathe in it or put it in your pool and swim in it, it isn't enough to pose a threat," Guidash said.

Bill Rutledge, an Azalea resident whose well tested positive for contamination, said he's not that concerned about the air in his house. "I won't be concerned about any exposure through the air until I see some of the testing come back," he said.

And Marge Culkin, president of the Stone's Throw condominium association, said she worried that the call for air testing might set off a panic she did not believe was warranted.

Workers first discovered the contamination by cancer-causing chemicals in 1991 near the intersection of 22nd Avenue and 72nd Street N.

The pollution originated from a drum storage area on land that then belonged to a company called E-Systems. Tests found a plume of chemicals - including vinyl chloride, trichloroethene, 1,4 Dioxane and cis-1,2-Dichloroethene. - in the groundwater beneath the site When Raytheon bought E-Systems in 1995, it inherited the pollution headache but did little beyond monitoring the problem.

In February 1999, Raytheon's consultants told the DEP that "plume containment has been achieved" by letting it dissipate naturally, so it posed "no imminent human health or ecological risk."

But six months later, in August 1999, DEP and Raytheon officials met to discuss the fact that the plume had spread "off-site." Last year, tests showed the plume moving under residential neighborhoods near Azalea Park, but most residents were not notified about it until recently.

In May, Gov. Charlie Crist called DEP Secretary Mike Sole to ask what his agency has done - and not done - to deal with the 17-year-old pollution problem.

"I told him, 'You need to get on this,'" Crist said.

Tests have found at least a dozen private irrigation wells that are contaminated by the plume so far. Raytheon spokesman Jonathan Kasle said the company is happy that the Health Department tests have declared the wells no threat, which is exactly what Raytheon has been saying all along.

Kasle would not comment on the DEP's call for the company to produce a cleanup plan prior to tonight's meeting. However, DEP documents show that Raytheon has already promised to produce such a plan "within the next few weeks."

The DEP is also telling Raytheon to install a monitoring well at Azalea Elementary School "to verify that the contamination has not migrated westward onto school property."

States News Service July 21, 2008

CLEAN UP WORK UNDERWAY AT SMITHFIELD, R.I. SITE

EPA has been working closely with the Rhode Island Dept. of Environmental Management (RI DEM) and local officials during the removal of potentially hazardous materials at the Providence Barrel Site in Smithfield, R.I.

Excavation of contaminated soils began in May, 2008. Last week, the transportation and disposal of the contaminated soil from the immediate Site began to take place. This week EPA expects to begin removal actions of contaminated soils on private properties.

The former Providence Barrel facility, located in a residential neighborhood on Oak Street in the village of Esmond in Smithfield, operated as a barrel reclamation facility from 1972 until 1980. The two-acre Site is currently inactive, but federal and state investigations indicate the presence of soil and potentially groundwater contamination. The exact chemical composition and volume of material spilled or dumped on the property is currently unknown. All buildings that existed on the property have been removed.

The work was prompted by a site investigation conducted by RI DEM, EPA and its Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team (START) contractor in Oct. 2005. Soil samples collected during the preliminary inspection process revealed the presence of elevated levels of lead, arsenic, semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs), perchloroethelene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE) in the soil. Based on these findings and subsequent investigations, in July, 2007, EPA recommended a removal action for this site.

In Dec. 2007, EPA collected soil gas and subsurface soil samples from 10 properties adjacent to the site to evaluate the potential for soil vapor intrusion into residential properties and to test the extent of subsurface contamination beyond the site boundaries. Both TCE and PCE were found at elevated levels in samples collected from beyond the site, indicating that there is the potential for soil gas impacting indoor air of neighboring residences. Additional soil gas and indoor air samples collected in May, 2008 identified low levels of organic vapors in some basements. The data was evaluated and levels are below health concerns.

EPA and RI DEM continue to work closely with Town of Smithfield officials and residents of the nearby residential neighborhood to provide information about the assessment and removal work at the property.

The Cincinnati Enquirer July 23, 2008

Locals criticize plant cleanup

Pleasant Ridge citizens call Hilton Davis plans lax

PLEASANT RIDGE - Residents of this Cincinnati neighborhood are having a Kodak moment. But it's not warm and fuzzy.

Lawns in the area have sprouted signs employing the distinctive Eastman Kodak insignia and color scheme to accentuate a pointed message: "Clean Up Hilton Davis! Kodak's Plan: Not a Pretty Picture."

The signs protest the latest in a long line of final proposals to clean up the contaminated site of the former Hilton Davis chemical plant. North Pastoria Environmental Corp., a subsidiary of Eastman Kodak, owns the land.

The plant still operates, but under new ownership and a new name: Emerald Hilton Davis.

"Many people assume the site has been completely cleaned up," said Steve Simon, president of the Pleasant Ridge Community Council.

"The signs remind people there's still work to be done. And it must be done right."

"We absolutely oppose the proposal Kodak has made," said Marjorie Evert, chairwoman of the 23-year-old grass-roots group, Citizens Concerned about Hilton Davis.

Kodak has sent a proposal to the Ohio EPA that includes installing a clay covering and erecting a drain to collect run-off in Bloody Run Creek Ravine, a contaminated section of the 80-acre plant site.

This proposal stems from a court-ordered 1986 consent decree dealing with the site's clean-up. This is the third final proposal Kodak has made.

"Very seldom is a proposal stamped 'approved' the first time around," said Harold O'Connell, supervisor of the Division of Hazardous Waste Management at the Ohio EPA's office in Dayton.

After three revisions, "we now have a report that is comprehensive," O'Connell said. "It is being evaluated."

No deadline exists for the evaluation's completion.

O'Connell did note that once the final clean-up plan is approved, there will be a 60-day discussion period.

The neighborhood's two citizen groups have spent decades demanding the clean-up.

They "would participate in those decisions," O'Connell said. "They have had a bite of the apple every time we have sat down with the company."

Members of both citizens groups are afraid the apple may be poisoned. They fear the proposed clean-up plan does not go far enough to ensure the area won't be threatened by toxic wastes in the future.

"Tests show there's lead and other contaminants in the area, which has not been a creek or a ravine for a long time," Evert said.

"From the 1920s to the 1970s, the ravine was a dumping ground for solvents and chemical waste from the products Hilton Davis made," said Henry S. Cole, a Maryland-based atmospheric and earth scientist and the citizens groups' environmental consultant since 1990.

None of the pollutants came from the current owners of the plant, which makes various dyes and food-coloring products.

While clay is often used to cover polluted sites, Cole calls for more stringent measures.

He wants the soil to be thoroughly sampled for toxic vapors. If those vapors exist, vacuum pumps should be installed to remove thefumes.

Hot spots - "places where contaminants are highly concentrated" in the soil, Cole said - should be excavated.

The site has come a long way from the 1960s, when six acres of smelly lagoons were filled with a toxic chemical sludge.

"They were industrial sewers," Evert said. "And they stunk."

The lagoons were cleaned up, "in the 1990s," Cole said.

Since then, the air around Pleasant Ridge has smelled more pleasant. The smells may be gone, but the neighborhood's residents continue to raise a stink over the site.

"The clean-up of this place has been a moving target for years," Evert said. This site has been a matter of widespread concern. Not just for Pleasant Ridge."

The property also sits near homes in Bond Hill, Golf Manor and Norwood.

"It affects so many people," Evert added. That's why we have to get this clean-up right the first time."

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle August 22, 2008

Vapors end deal for new School 54

A defunct Rochester charter school located in the former Mapledale Party House, once eyed by the city as a possible site for a public school, is now considered by the city to be too contaminated to consider buying.

That assessment, based on an environmental review that found excessive levels of toxic substances in the air inside the building, raises questions about the potential danger posed to 650 students and staff of the former Rochester Leadership Academy Charter School, which operated there from 2003 to 2005.

But it also derailed, some say unfairly so, a yearlong effort by the city and the Rochester School District to acquire the site to house School 54, which for 17 years has leased space and endured threats of closure in tight fiscal times.

Superintendent Jean-Claude Brizard is expected today to share details of the collapsed deal with School 54 staff and parents, many of whom are suspicious of the contamination claims.

"It's really sad because the principal and those kids have waited a long time for their own space," said Van White, the Rochester Board of Education's liaison to School 54. "It's a beautiful physical plant. The charter school put a lot of money into that facility.

"But if this is what the experts say, we can't have the kids in harm's way."

The old banquet hall was reportedly given a $3.2 million makeover when the Michigan-based National Heritage Academies bought the 6-acre site on Maple Street in 2003. More than 30 classrooms were carved out of 48,425 square feet; a gymnasium was added. Burgundy lockers still line the carpeted hallways.

The property went back on the market shortly after the state revoked Rochester Leadership Academy's charter in 2005 for poor academic performance. All its trimmings, including desks, chairs, filing cabinets, a digital security system, and even a trophy case, would have been thrown in for $5.2 million.

In 2007, National Heritage accepted an offer of $3.75 million from the city, which brokers property procurement for the school district. Both the City Council and the school board passed measures last year authorizing the purchase.

School 54, which had been leasing space for two years at the former Sacred Heart Cathedral School on Flower City Park at about $141,500 a year, was to start the 2008-09 school year on Maple Street.

"We were all excited," said Mavis Santiago, president of the parents association at School 54, who also had a daughter enrolled at Rochester Leadership Academy. "I know that building and it is beautiful inside."

Nine months and an environmental review of the site later, however, the city took its first step to abandon the deal.

The review, conducted by Rochester-based DAY Environmental Inc. and obtained by the Democrat and Chronicle, detected dichloroethene, trichloroethene, vinyl chloride, and trichlorofluoromethane, a freon used in refrigeration systems, in the schoolhouse air in concentrations higher than state safety guidelines.

Investigators attributed most of the toxic chemicals to materials stored temporarily in the basement, but could not trace the source of the freon. It appeared to be emanating from beneath the building. They recommended that a ventilation system be installed under the foundation to mitigate the toxic chemicals.

Freon belongs to a class of chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons, or CFC's, that can damage the ozone layer. The gas has been banned in the United States since 1995 because of its effects on the environment.

Investigators also suggested that an environmental management plan be devised to identify and dispose of toxic chemicals that could be in the soil and groundwater.

In a letter dated April 25 to school district officials, Mayor Robert Duffy recommended the acquisition be abandoned, citing an "unsatisfactory" environmental review and unanticipated costs to clean up the site.

The Board of Education accepted the recommendation and on May 22 exercised its option to extend the lease at Sacred Heart for one year at $150,300. The deal was dead.

{}How contaminated?

While the property is perhaps best remembered as the location of the former Mapledale Party House, the site has a long history of industrial use. According to the environmental report done for the city, the land previously housed a gas station, a creamery, a tool-and-die shop, and a potato chip factory.

An environmental assessment of the site conducted in 2003 for National Heritage found gasoline in the soil that "slightly exceeded" state standards, a history of the site chronicled by DAY Environmental shows.

The contaminated soil was excavated and the state Department of Environmental Conservation issued National Heritage a letter in December 2003 that indicated no further remedial work was necessary.

But the air quality of the site was never tested because neither state nor local regulations required it. Indeed, the state Department of Health first published guidelines for testing indoor air quality and vapor intrusion in 2006 and air testing remains largely discretionary.

"Buildings often are converted from one use to another," said John Ricci, spokesman for the Monroe County Health Department. "There is no requirement that the air be tested as part of the process."

National Heritage spokeswoman Tara Powers said the charter school operators met all ventilation requirements and environmental standards. "The building was in full compliance of all standards," Powers said.

Environmental consultants and chemical engineers who reviewed the environmental assessment for this story said it is unlikely that the site could have sickened people who previously worked or went to school there. The concentration of the contaminants is too low, they said.

"Would I anticipate that any person, child or employee, had any detrimental impact on their health from these contaminants? Absolutely not," said Neal Langerman of the Division of Chemical Health and Safety of the American Chemical Society and a chemical consultant based in San Diego, Calif.

"But each of the various (contaminants) that they flagged on this are infiltrating the property," he continued. "What a risk manager has to consider is will these things lead to a problem like litigation 10 years downstream. I could not look a potential buyer in the eyes and say that won't occur."

{}Undone deal

The collapse of the deal dumbfounded stakeholders on both sides.

On a recent tour of the schoolhouse, Cliff Wilson, a real estate agent with Nothnagle Realtors, which represents National Heritage, noted that the owners have already begun venting the building. He pointed to black plastic pipes sunk into the concrete floor and snaking through the hallways.

"All I know is my clients are saying, 'Whatever's wrong with the building, we'll clean it up,'" Wilson said. "It's such a sad story because it's a waste of a beautiful building. Look at this place. It's ready to go."

District planners, eager to place School 54 in a permanent home, couldn't understand why the city was so sour on the deal if it wouldn't pay for the cleanup.

Brizard conceded in an interview that his own facilities planners were frustrated that the purchase fell through, but made no apologies for scrapping the plan.

"I don't want 10 years from now to find out there's a cancer cluster or some other health issue there," said Brizard., who holds an undergraduate degree in chemistry. "I'm not putting that on my conscience."

District spokesman Tom Petronio said the district has renewed its search for a suitable location for School 54.

City spokesman Ted Capuano laid the decision to call off the purchase on the school district, noting that the mayor only recommended that the deal be dropped.

Mark Gregor, the city's chief environmental officer, acknowledged in an interview that none of the environmental concerns, which also included slightly elevated levels of other toxics in the soil and groundwater around the site, were irreversible.

"Certainly the issue identified can be mitigated," said Gregor. "Part of what is always a concern with these projects is timing. How long will it take for the owners to completely address these issues? Right now we don't know how long it would take."

At School 54, where the Sacred Heart school cafeteria doubles as a gymnasium and auditorium, years of what parents characterize as undelivered promises of a new school have many doubting the veracity of the claims about the Maple Street building.

"My kid went there for two years, now you're telling me that my kid may be contaminated with what was there?" said Mavis Santiago, the parents association president whose daughter attended Rochester Leadership.

"I don't believe that story. That party house was there for years. I think it's an excuse."

Staff and parents said they learned that the deal had fallen through in June and have waited months for details.

"It's like they've been jerking our chains for years," said Charmaine Geeter, who has two grandchildren at School 54 and toured the schoolhouse last year. "If it's an environmental problem, like they say, why can you still see mothers with their children on the playground?"

Chris Shanley, a fourth-grade teacher who also toured the schoolhouse last year, said he was under the impression that the cost of the cleanup was the deal breaker. Nonetheless, he remains optimistic that a new building is in School 54's future.

"We've been told by three consecutive superintendents that this is going to happen," Shanley said.

States News Service September 9, 2008

EPA BEGINS STUDY OF TCE CONTAMINANTS AT CARTER CARBURETOR SITE

KANSAS CITY, Kan- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 7 will begin a vapor intrusion study today at the Carter Carburetor Corporation site, 2000-2840 N. Spring St., in St. Louis to determine if trichloroethylene (TCE) vapors are present beneath the floor of the building. EPA's Mobile Lab, staffed by EPA contractors, will be on site for approximately two weeks collecting samples.

The testing should help EPA determine if there is a potential for these vapors to intrude and accumulate in this building or any future development on the site. The information will also be needed to make decisions as to the type of cleanup that will be needed, if any.

The Carter Carburetor site is a former carburetor manufacturing plant. Gasoline and diesel powered carburetors were made at the site from the 1930s until 1984, when the plant was closed. EPA site investigations found unacceptable levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the building and some areas outside the buildings. ACF Industries demolished and disposed of three smaller buildings where PCBs were used in the manufacturing process.

ACF Industries discovered TCE contamination in the subsurface while conducting an engineering evaluation and cost analysis under EPA oversight at the site. EPA's sampling is a follow-up to that discovery. TCE can form vapors which can travel through the soil and enter buildings through cracks or other openings in the floor.

St. Petersburg Times September 19, 2008

AIR CLEAR IN HOMES BY RAYTHEON

State tests show harmful vapors have not come up from the toxic plume underground.

The air inside homes near the Raytheon plant appears to be free of the three main toxic chemicals spreading beneath the Azalea neighborhood near Tyrone Square Mall, state health officials said Thursday.

Air samples taken inside nine homes and condominiums in the neighborhood all came back negative for those chemicals, said Susan Skye, a scientist with the state Department of Health.

"It does not appear that vapor intrusion is likely," she said.

However, not all the tests were analyzed, because four of them disappeared. State records show those four samples were put in a box handed to DHL to ship to a laboratory in Utah, just like the other samples. But that particular box did not arrive, Skye said.

But the missing samples were from sites where the Department of Health had taken other samples that did make it to the lab in Utah, she said. Still, if the missing samples do not turn up by next week, she said, the state will go out and take new ones.

Two samples did show elevated levels of a contaminant that was not one of the major concerns in the toxic underground plume, Skye said. However, those samples came from homes where the residents smoke, she said, and cigarette smoke could explain those readings.

Health officials were concerned about the possibility of vapors from the contaminants, now flowing toward Boca Ciega Bay, migrating up into houses throughout the Azalea neighborhood.

Workers discovered the contamination by cancer-causing chemicals in 1991 near the intersection of 22nd Avenue and 72nd Street N.

The pollution originated from a drum storage area on land that then belonged to a company called E-Systems. Tests found a plume of chemicals - including vinyl chloride, trichloroethene, 1,4 Dioxane and cis-1,2-Dichloroethene - in the groundwater beneath the site. When Raytheon bought E-Systems in 1995, it inherited the pollution headache but did little beyond monitoring the problem.

In February 1999, Raytheon's consultants told the state Department of Environmental Protection that "plume containment has been achieved" by letting it dissipate naturally, so it posed "no imminent human health or ecological risk."

But six months later, in August 1999, DEP and Raytheon officials met to discuss the fact that the plume had spread "offsite." Last year, tests showed the plume moving under residential neighborhoods near Azalea Park, but most residents were not notified about it until earlier this year.

Raytheon has proposed a cleanup plan for the neighborhood. DEP officials said they are still reviewing the plan to see if it will be approved.

The Record September 21, 2008

DuPont works to rid fumes in homes; Pompton Lakes residents still wary

POMPTON LAKES ? DuPont's program to prevent chemical fumes from invading residences in a neighborhood here is progressing through almost 400 homes to date.

Meanwhile, borough leaders responding to residents' distrust of the effort are hiring a private vapors expert to monitor the situation.

DuPont representatives have applied to the state for 17 permits and received six to install vapor venting systems into homes that risk being polluted with toxic fumes emanating from underground water pollution.

Both the company and state environmental staff overseeing the mitigation program have described the pollution as low-grade. However, affected residents are expressing mounting frustrations.

The pollution is a result of the company's dumping degreasing solvents at the facility when it produced explosive materials for industrial use and the U.S. military over a 100-year period.

"To date, we have scheduled and/or collected indoor air samples, and begun and/or completed mitigation system designs in a total of 376 homes," said Bob Nelson, public affairs manager for DuPont. "We have contacted an additional 60 residents, but have not yet scheduled work at their houses."

DuPont is conducting a program of soil and air sampling aimed at detecting whether any vapors of two degreasing agents are invading basements in a neighborhood of some 400 homes. Nelson said preliminary results have been received from the state Department of Environmental Protection certified laboratory for 262 indoor air samples.

"The majority show that no PCE [tetrachloroethylene] and TCE [trichloroethylene] was detected," Nelson said. "In the samples where the compounds were detected, the average concentration encountered was 4.3 micrograms per cubic meter of PCE and 2.7 for TCE."

The state baseline for screening is 1 microgram per cubic meter, and its so-called "rapid action" measure ? prompting a requirement of mitigation systems ? is 30 micrograms for PCE and 20 for TCE.

Similar numbers of TCE and PCE to those being found, Nelson said, were detected in background levels at other areas in the U.S.

"That means that TCE and PCE were detected, despite not having a vapor intrusion situation," he said. "Background levels could be a result of chemicals contained in dry cleaning or in daily household items where TCE and PCE are still currently used."

Both chemicals are listed by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry as probable human carcinogens. And some residents living above the plume of contamination remain anxious about the long-term health effects of the contamination and about property depreciation. It moved them to reach out to three law firms to see what their legal rights are.

DuPont representatives said they are gathering real estate information "to determine if the vapor mitigation situation will affect the real estate market in the local area."

"We will coordinate and seek input from local Realtors to help us analyze the local market and conditions over a period of time," Nelson said.

Nelson said there is no plan for DuPont to buy the properties within the plume, which is located in the southeast section of town. But some residents are looking to get out now.

"I want them [DuPont] to buy my house so I can leave here," said Regina Sisco, who lives on Cedar Street. "Residents involved in this are like prisoners in their own houses. They're damned if they stay and damned if they try to sell. ? On top of that, I just received a $1,100 tax hike. I don't feel I have to pay an increase, because my house is contaminated."

In a random sampling of affected residents, several said they would sell, if they got a fair price.

"If I could get out now and be compensated, I would," said Jamil Aburomi. "I'm upset, concerned for the health of myself and my family, what we may have risked already and could in the future. I don't believe anything they [DuPont] say. ? I'm stuck living in a house that could have contaminated fumes. Who would buy the property?"

Even those who aren't looking to sell now feel as if they are being asked to play a waiting game.

"You're lost and they're dragging their feet. You don't get the information you need," said Bill Hennessy, who has resided on Colfax Avenue for 31 years. DuPont tested the air in his basement in late July but he said he hasn't heard anything since then about findings. The DEP said there is only one laboratory in the state that does such testing and results are not available for about five weeks.

"What do you do in the meantime?" Hennessy said. "I built upstairs for my daughter, grandchildren and son-in-law and I'm worried about living here. So you wait."

Borough leaders, spurred by resident concerns and criticism that they were not doing enough to protect the interests of homeowners, agreed to hire a private vapors expert to oversee the situation. Mayor Katie Cole also formed a citizens committee of plume residents to oversee it, which was approved by the Borough Council.

DuPont, on the other hand, has given out literature and held two informational meetings to answer residents' questions. Representatives said that each resident approached for testing and/or installing a vapor mitigation system is given a thorough explanation of the process. They maintain they have been proactive and responsible in keeping residents informed. They cite the offer to install the venting systems as a precautionary measure.

The DEP has approved DuPont's work plan for the cleanup, which was set in motion in May when DuPont representatives said state-mandated testing of groundwater for vapor intrusion revealed higher than DEP-approved levels of PCE and TCE, which can travel into homes through foundation cracks.

According to DuPont engineers, the company has been operating a remediation system or groundwater pump at the plant site since 1998 to prevent the migration of contaminants in groundwater. A groundwater sampling program conducted over time has shown that contaminant levels in the groundwater southeast of the site have been lowering and data suggests that the off-site shallow groundwater plume is dissipating in the residential area, they said.

At the same time, residents living within the plume are being advised by DEP and DuPont officials to install the mitigating systems in their homes. But many are reluctant ? or flatly refuse.

"I don't want this pipe coming out of the side of my house," said Amelia Sorce of Jefferson Street. "Winter is not the time to do testing anyway when the indoor air is

warmer than outdoor air. No one is going to get high numbers now and they can't say that, although a reading is low, it won't be high later."

DuPont's plan includes payment of the electricity bill for each installed system, which will continue to be monitored.

The Times (Shreveport) September 30, 2008

EPA begins cleanup of Bossier neighborhood

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is supervising an extensive cleanup of a Bossier City neighborhood to remove decades' worth of contaminated groundwater.

Residents near John Wesley Boulevard at Bobby Street, south of Interstate 20, might notice a series of tanks and engines the EPA installed this month to suck the groundwater from underneath nearby houses. The EPA is trying to remove what supervisors call "light nonaqueous phase liquid," which, essentially, is oil.

The machinery culminates more than a decades' worth of efforts by local residents to get something done about that intersection, once home to the Arkansas Fuel Oil Refinery. It has since been labeled an "alternative Superfund site," what the government labels some of the nation's most toxic, abandoned waste sites.

The refinery was shut down between 1944 and 1948 "" EPA investigators aren't exactly sure when "" and eventually was demolished.

The land was purchased by developers, who had agreed to clean it.

But residents and EPA officials have dealt with remnants of the plant for more than a decade now. In 1999, a waterline break bubbled up dirt covered in black goo, alarming residents who feared the chemicals could be harmful.

The alternative Superfund area consists of about 215 acres, including numerous apartments, townhouses, motels, a church, a visitors' bureau and Rusheon Middle School. In this latest go-around, the EPA and Glenn Springs Holding Inc., the company responsible for the cleanup, is focusing on three or four acres of particularly contaminated groundwater.

Area residents use city water for drinking. Bossier City has banned groundwater from that area for drinking.

EPA officials said the most likely health risks would be through the air. "Health risks that are being evaluated would be what we would call vapor intrusion contaminants that can volatilize and move up the soil column into indoor airspace," said Laura Stankosky, EPA remedial project manager for the site.

Residents should be able to smell what is essentially a gasoline odor if vapors come out of the soil. If so, the EPA urges them to call a special help line at (318) 459-2635. At no cost, officials will help seal local homes. If that fails, inspectors can modify central air and heating units to help pressurize houses, thus keeping out most fumes.

States News Service October 9, 2008

U.S. EPA TO SAMPLE INDOOR AIR AT SANTA ROSA HOMES, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEAR DRY CLEANING SHOP

On Saturday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will begin testing inside several homes and at an elementary school after preliminary results from soil vapor sampling indicate volatile organic compounds have been found close to the surface near a dry cleaning facility in Santa Rosa, Calif.

The EPA, on behalf of the California Department of Toxic Substances Control and the Regional Water Quality Control Board, will sample the indoor air over a 24-hour period in homes and at the Steele Lane Elementary School to see if contaminants in the soil and groundwater have migrated from the Peter Pan Cleaners at 2231 Mendocino Ave., and are accumulating indoors. The contaminants are the result of past practices at the facility and are no longer used at this location.

As a precaution, the EPA wants to make sure VOCs are not building up in homes and at the school, said Donn Zuroski, the EPA's on-scene coordinator. The EPA is working with the regional board and DTSC to monitor the air, and if needed, will take the necessary steps until the situation is remedied.

The EPA expects preliminary results back in approximately one week.

Contamination in the soil, soil vapor and groundwater in areas near the Peter Pan Cleaners consists of VOCs, which can move from underground and come up through the soil if conditions are right. If VOCs move under a home or other building, it is possible for vapors to come up through cracks in foundations and accumulate inside. If this happens, and if the levels of VOCs are high enough, it can create a health hazard for residents, especially children or pregnant women.

The presence of tetrachloroethylene, or PCE, in groundwater was discovered in 2002 when a private water supply well on Rowe Drive in Santa Rosa was tested for VOCs. Subsequent historical and physical investigative work identified Peter Pan Cleaners as the source of the PCE contamination. PCE is a chemical typically used in the dry cleaning industry.

DTSC is the lead agency overseeing the groundwater investigation and cleanup project, and will assume the cleanup following the EPA's investigation. The regional board directed the dry cleaners to investigate the subsurface contamination problem. Groundwater studies led to a recent soil vapor study, where near-surface soil vapor --

chlorinated solvents, PCE and related compounds -- results indicate a potential for vapor intrusion into nearby homes and the school.

Drinking water comes from municipal sources, and is not affected by the groundwater contamination from this area.

The Record October 16, 2008

State hears toxic fears; DuPont neighbors, health officials talk one on one

POMPTON LAKES- Residents fretting about DuPont's pollution below their homes got to tell state health officials about their health and intimate fears Wednesday as the state intensified its collection of information.

The two-hour, one-on-one sessions were part of a Public Health Assessment by the state Department of Health and Senior Services and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Vapors of two industrial degreasers are rising through soil from tainted groundwater, and DuPont is testing to determine if they're invading some 400 homes.

The health assessment, which can take up to a year, considers the level of hazardous substances, whether people might be exposed to them and for how long, and what harm the substances might pose to people in the affected area.

On Wednesday, the closed-door interviews set for the afternoon attracted about 20 residents. Health staff took down medical information and offered contact information in return.

"I have a son who was 2 1/2 when we moved here. ? He's 6 now and has learning disabilities," Luljeta Ismajloski, who is pregnant, later told a reporter. "I am anxious for the child I am carrying."

Health staff gave her information including a phone number for the Mount Sinai Medical Center Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit. "They were a help, but not much," she said.

Another pregnant woman, Liz, who asked that her last name not be used, plans to set up an appointment at the Mount Sinai unit.

"I wanted to talk to them about health conditions regarding my unborn child and 3 1/2-year-old son," she said. "They were very helpful. I want to see the schools tested, too, besides the homes. We love the town, but we're concerned if it's not a safe place."

The vapors are the result of DuPont's dumping solvents at its former explosives factory grounds. The threat they pose to the nearby northeast neighborhood was detected in May. DuPont's effort to deal with the vapors comes atop its ongoing $130 million efforts to rid the area of mercury, lead and solvents.

Residents living above the so-called pollution "plume" are seeking any information available on the scope of the threat. But health staff said Wednesday they are still studying samples and results.

"The Department of Environmental Protection asked us to evaluate indoor air issues and has provided all of the indoor air and soil gas data that was measured and provided to residents," said Dawn Thomas, health department communication officer. "We are evaluating indoor air contamination that may result from vapor intrusion that may enter into the living spaces of the houses."

Last month, the DEP said that the levels of the carcinogens tetrachloroethylene (PCE) and trichloroethylene (TCE) so far sampled do not pose "a significant threat." But results are not all in.

State health staff met with residents preliminarily in June and July. Wednesday's meetings were held to let residents pose health questions.

"Once we have identified the theoretical public health risk ? by factoring in the contaminant, its concentration, how people come in contact with the contaminant, and for how long ? we can recommend follow-up activities such as health care provider education or further studies," Thomas said. "This is a step in the process, and it takes time. There might be those who don't want to discuss health problems publicly."

From the start, the DEP has advised affected residents to accept DuPont's offer to install, at its expense, vapor venting systems in their homes. But some have resisted, fearing the systems will lessen the sale values of their homes.

Agnes Corazza, 84, who has lived in a duplex over the plume since 1952, told health staff she has cancer, her husband died of it, and her daughter has breast cancer. "But I don't know if it's from [the pollution]," she said.

Press & Sun-Bulletin November 8, 2008

TCE suit against IBM rises to 600 plaintiffs

Company denies role in increasing risk of disease

The list of parties suing IBM for pollution in Endicott continues to grow by the hundreds and now includes a commercial real estate broker.

In a flurry of paperwork filed in state Supreme Court in Binghamton this year, the names of about 360 more plaintiffs have been added to the list of parties claiming the pollution ruined their health and devalued their properties.

That brings the total to about 600 plaintiffs, with several hundred more to come. That's according to Phil Johnson, who is part of an extensive legal team representing clients seeking $100 million in claims from IBM related to TCE flowing from the Endicott plant into nearby commercial and residential neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, IBM has answered the lawsuit, rebutting the claims of the first 94 plaintiffs filed in January.

According to court documents, the company "denies IBM's conduct with respect to its former Endicott facility caused any of the plaintiffs to become ill, caused them to suffer any increased risk of disease, or damaged any plaintiff's property."

It then listed 23 defenses. They included assertion that other parties were responsible for the injuries and damages, or they were from pre-existing or unrelated conditions.

Defenses also include jurisdictional and technical grounds regarding how the toxic court case was filed.

IBM representatives had no comment beyond what was filed in court.

Attorneys suing IBM began signing up clients in 2003, soon after the discovery by state health and environmental officials that the underground plume of chemicals - dating prior to 1979 - had been forming fumes and entering buildings.

Exposure to TCE, an industrial solvent widely used in the 1970s, is linked to illnesses ranging from cancer to brain damage, but levels that pose calculable risks are debatable.

{}Plaintiffs grouped

Because of the size and complexity of the case, attorneys are organizing the plaintiffs into about six or seven groups, each representing a cross section of claims.

Johnson expects one or two more batches of claims will be filed in coming months.

Although no public court hearings have been scheduled, both sides have subpoenaed witnesses and ordered documents to build a case against the other as part of the discovery process.

"The discovery process is actively under way," said Johnson, though he declined to give more specific information in the case, which so far has been limited mostly to private meetings with the judge and lawyers from both sides to lay out the ground rules.

{}Legal process mapped

In June, Judge Ferris D. Lebous issued an outline and schedule for the discovery to proceed through the end of the year.

As part of that process, people making the claims are facing intensive questioning under oath from IBM lawyers trying to discredit their stories.

Lawyers suing IBM, conversely, have begun receiving documents giving them a more detailed understanding of the company's use and handling of TCE and IBM's knowledge of the pollution affecting hundreds of properties near the microelectronics plant on North Street.

Those properties included 111 Grant Ave., which was bought by commercial real estate broker Robert Mead in 1995, before the extent and impact of the pollution became publicly known. Mead is a principal in Grant Avenue Associates. He had no comment on the matter Friday.

Grant Avenue Associates, included as one of the plaintiffs, claims IBM never disclosed the building was polluted, and the company would not have bought it if it had. The complaint also claims the pollution made it impossible to lease the building after vapor intrusion was documented in the area in 2003, leading to financial losses

Public Opinion November 26, 2008

Vapor intrusion adds to pollution at Letterkenny Army Depot

A new form of pollution has bubbled up at Letterkenny Army Depot.

Degreasers discarded 40 years ago are reappearing as vapor intrusion on the depot north of Chambersburg. Vapors rise through the soil from polluted groundwater and are trapped under the concrete floors of buildings and basements.

It's not yet known how the vapor could affect future residential development, some Letterkenny shops and some houses north of the depot.

"Vapor intrusion is one of those emerging issues," said Bryan Hoke, environmental coordinator for the cleanup of land the Army is transferring to the community. "Between the Army and the regulators, we are asking a lot of questions."

While technicians are sampling for vapor under the concrete slabs of homes and other buildings, the Environmental Protection Agency and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection have not assigned a risk to the presence of the vapor.

Hoke stated the Army's position: "Until you get a risk, there's no need for remedial action."

The Army has spent $120 million in the past 25 years cleaning up tainted groundwater and soil at Letterkenny.

Sampling vapor

The plume of groundwater pollution has drifted north, off the depot. Decades ago, homes were disconnected from their wells and hooked up to public water because of the pollution. Treatment systems have scrubbed the groundwater for years. The plume has been shrinking and the water clearing up, according to Stacie Popp, technical director with Army consultant Weston Solutions Inc.

The degreasing chemicals vaporize when exposed to air, but last a long time underground. Vapors apparently have been rising out of the water for years.

"In my opinion, the concrete is acting as a cap," Hoke said. "I think (the vapors) have been sitting there for a long, long time."

In March and July the Army sampled vapor under 20 homes off depot and several buildings on the depot. The residential results are not yet available. The data is being validated, according to Joseph Petrasek, restoration program manager at Letterkenny.

The soil under the floors for six of the eight Army buildings, including buildings 350 and 320, gave off high levels of trichloroethylene and/or tetrachloroethylene vapor. Excessive exposure to the two chemicals may cause kidney and liver damage and other health problems, according to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

The chemicals were not detected in air sampled from offices in two buildings, according to Hoke.

"Right now, the workers aren't at risk," said Matt Clapp, project manager with Weston.

"What happens when you get a crack in the foundation?" Hoke said.

"If there's any risk out there, it would be a chronic risk" -- prolonged exposure over 30 years or so, said Jerry Hoover, project manager for EPA in Philadelphia.

Treatment could be expensive. To remove the vapor by extraction might take a lot of energy, according to Popp. A simple solution could be installing a foundation ventilation system similar to those used to vent radon gas.

An estimated 7,000 military sites have contaminated groundwater, according to the Department of Defense. Each has the potential for vapor intrusion paths.

Off depot

Just as Letterkenny's water pollution extends into the community so does the potential for vapor intrusion:

n The polluted groundwater plume extends to undeveloped farm fields to the north.

n Vapor has been detected under buildings that are to become part of the Cumberland Valley Business Park.

Development of the farmland into homes poses the "stickiest situation," according to Clapp.

Vapor intrusion can pose potential legal issues for lenders, according to Due Diligence Inspection and Assessment Services.

Sampling for the vapor costs more than installing a vent system with new construction, Popp said.

The level of vapor intrusion is not uniform over the groundwater plume because of the sponge-like limestone geography, according to engineers.

Land use controls might be in order, Popp said.

Letterkenny has imposed deed restrictions on land that has transferred from the Army to the community.

Contractors cannot excavate deeper than 6 feet and buildings do not have basements in most of the Cumberland Valley Business Park. The Letterkenny Industrial Development Authority is building the business park on about 1,000 acres the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission ordered the Army to give the community. Environmental cleanup has delayed the transfer.

As a result of the vapor intrusion study, the transfer of two buildings has been delayed until the issue is clarified. Buildings 47 and 37 will remain in the Army's hands for a couple more years.

To make use of the buildings in the meantime, the Army leases the buildings to LIDA, which leases them to private developer IRG, who leases them to the Army. Only IRG is collecting rent. IRG also is responsible for upkeep of the 50-year-old brick warehouses. Once the buildings transfer to LIDA, IRG will buy them from LIDA.

Vapor intrusion is a "minor concern" for LIDA because only adults have the potential to be exposed during work shifts, according to LIDA Executive Director John Van Horn. The park is restricted to commercial and industrial development and would not host a residential development with children.

"Right now we have institutional controls that limit use and access to the groundwater," Van Horn said. "If vapor intrusion becomes a concern, we may have to accept and pass on institutional controls."

The Army is responsible for known and unknown results of its past pollution, Van Horn said.

Herald News November 28, 2008

Firm hired to watch over DuPont; To check work on vapors in 400 homes

POMPTON LAKES ? The Borough Council has voted unanimously to hire a Parsippany-based firm to watch over DuPont's testing and mitigating of hazardous vapors rising into a neighborhood in the northeast part of town.

The contract with Environmental Waste Management Associates of Parsippany is for about $56,000. The council action Monday night authorized a total of $75,000 to allow for sampling work.

For weeks, residents of some 400 homes over the so-called "plume" of contamination have pleaded for progressive action by the council to check on DuPont's program to test for, and deal with, toxic contamination in basements.

In May, tests found elevated levels of vapors of the degreasers tetrachloroethylene and trichloroethylene in the groundwater ? pollution from DuPont's former explosives factory.

Fearing for their families' health and depreciation of their property values, residents are mistrustful of DuPont's testing of their homes and the mitigation remedies ? including freely provided installed vapor venting systems ? used by the chemical giant and approved by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

They asked borough leaders to hire an independent vapors expert to oversee DuPont's program.

A three-member committee of Councilmen Mike Simone and Ed Meakem and Mayor Katie Cole first selected Jacques Whitford, a firm in Elmsford, N.Y., out of 11 bidders for the job. But when representatives of the Whitford company visited last month, the public took issue with a "no third party" clause in its contract regarding use of information it gathered. Residents wanted to be able to use findings.

"If either Pompton Lakes or the residents of the borough call the engineer as an expert witness in a lawsuit and use their data in that lawsuit, then the person who calls them has

to pay an expert witness fee," said Joseph Ragno Jr., borough attorney. "It would have been the same with the other contract but under the first, the contractor also made a demand that the borough would have to indemnify them or pay any damage they would suffer as a result of a third party using their data. In either case, the borough was going to share the information."

Another difference: "Both companies are equally qualified but the first firm was less expensive," said Simone. "The contract was substantially cheaper."

The company will review the vapor intrusion plan prepared by DuPont and approved by the DEP. "Then they look at the way that they perform the tests to be certain that they are complying with the approved plan," said Simone.

Next, the consultant will look at test results and tell the governing body if it agrees with the plan and if it agrees that testing was done properly, and it will interpret the results so council members can understand them.

The company will make recommendations for sampling ? how many tests should be taken, what type of tests, and where they should be taken and review proposed treatment units.

The New York Times December 8, 2008

A Problem Rises to the Surface in Greenpoint

For decades, people in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, have lived with the possible health hazards from oil spills in their industrial waterfront. Up to 30 million gallons of petroleum -- almost three times the amount dumped off the Alaskan coast by the Exxon Valdez in 1989 -- made their way into Newtown Creek and surrounding neighborhoods from dozens of refineries over more than a century.
Now residents have a new anxiety: Toxic gases may be rising into their homes from below, the legacy of dry-cleaning plants, foundries and other manufacturers that once operated in this hub, which has long been home to immigrants and, more recently, artists and young professionals.

Such vapor intrusion -- chemicals from contaminated soil and groundwater that become airborne, entering buildings through pores and cracks -- has become a growing public health concern around the country in recent years. Contaminants that spread from industrial activity, or that were mistakenly believed to have been contained or eliminated in environmental cleanups, have been discovered wafting into basements. Since 2005, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has been testing around the state to gauge the extent of the problem.

But while fixing the problem is relatively easy, agency officials said, getting some residents to cooperate is not.

In Greenpoint, as elsewhere, many homeowners -- worried about a blow to their property values or even being forced from their homes -- have ignored letters asking for access to their buildings, or have refused to answer the door for investigators.

"I don't want them to come in and say, 'We found this thing and now we have to condemn,' " said one homeowner on Beadel Street who said she refused to let the investigators into her home. She agreed to talk to a reporter only if she was not identified because she said she was not sure how her remarks would be used. "What's going to happen to me and my 20-year investment?"

In the section of Greenpoint that borders Williamsburg, south of the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway, 58 homes were chosen for inspection last February and March, but investigators from the conservation department and the State Department of Health have gained access to only 12. Still, the findings of such a small sample were revealing: Air in two of the homes was contaminated with chemicals used to dry-clean fabrics and degrease metal parts.

In another eight homes, the investigators found the same chemicals under the foundation; while they had not contaminated indoor air, they said, they could.

These preliminary findings are the first indication of homes' being directly exposed to contaminants in an area long concerned about potential health hazards -- not just from oil spills but also from other heavy industry and the city's largest sewage treatment plant, which has a history of violations of federal environmental standards.

Dale Desnoyers, director of environmental remediation for the Environmental Conservation Department, would not characterize the seriousness of the results, saying more testing was needed. "This is an investigation," he said, noting the sampling would also include businesses and industries in the area. "We'd like to see participation by a greater number of residents so we find out what's happening."

New York has led other states in efforts to detect vapor intrusion, environmental watchdogs say, spurred by contamination in places like Endicott, N.Y., where toxins found in homes and businesses in 2003 were traced in part to spills and leaks of chlorinated solvents used in assembling circuit boards at an I.B.M. campus there. The state has also passed a law, effective this month, requiring landlords to disclose to tenants the results of any indoor pollution tests that exceed safety guidelines.

In 2005, the state began revisiting 421 sites on its environmental cleanup list -- 14 of them in New York City -- where homes and commercial properties might be at risk for vapors, and so far it has identified 29 sites where indoor air showed contamination. Two of those were in New York City, affecting 32 commercial and residential properties in Queens, where the gases were traced to distribution centers for dry-cleaning and laundry supplies.

State officials said the remedy is similar to that used for radon, a more common source of household air pollution. The usual method involves sealing cracks and installing a system of vents underneath the foundation or the slab of a building to draw contaminated air outdoors.

The cost, $5,000 to $10,000, is paid by the state, which then pursues the parties responsible for the contamination to try to recoup expenses. Residents do not even have to leave the property during the day or two it takes to fix the problem, and should not fear eviction, state officials said.

But resistance even to testing is common, said Lenny Siegel, executive director of the Center for Public Environmental Oversight in California, which helps communities nationwide address environmental issues. He said reactions vary: Homeowners with young children tend to welcome testing, while those who plan to sell the home soon do not. Others may mistrust the government, be illegal residents or, Mr. Siegel said, be in denial.

Christine Holowacz, a community activist in Greenpoint, said that trying to get residents to cooperate was "a very, very delicate matter."

"It deals with people's livelihoods," she said, but stressed: "All of these things can be mitigated. This is not a Love Canal."

One challenge in demonstrating the gravity of the problem to the public is the lack of national standards about what level of contamination constitutes a hazard. New York tolerates a higher threshold level than states like New Jersey and California.

In Greenpoint, testing has found tetrachloroethene, also known as PCE or perc, and trichloroethene or TCE, manufactured chemicals used for dry-cleaning fabrics and degreasing metal parts, state officials said; they were released by several business that no longer operate in the area or use the chemicals. Exposure to PCE or TCE in the air, according to the State Department of Health, can cause dizziness, headaches, impaired balance -- and worse problems like organ damage and increased risk of cancer, depending on the level and length of exposure.

At the request of community groups, the Health Department plans a study of residents near Newtown Creek in 2009 to examine rates of cancer and birth-related problems, said a spokeswoman, Claire Pospisil.

Many in the area are anxious. Charley Friedman, 40, an artist who owns a three-story building where he lives with his wife and 5-year-old daughter and rents out the other apartments, said his wife recently asked the Health Department to test the air. "I'm concerned about real estate values," he said, "but I'm more concerned about my health."

The property is on Sutton Street, in an area north of the expressway where state officials tested 52 homes -- out of 388 contacted -- and did not register a problem. Still, Mr. Friedman noted, there were contamination findings just to the south.

"It worries me that it's so close," he said. "The more I hear, the more scared I get for me and my family."

Greenpoint, long an enclave for Polish, Latino and other immigrants at the northern tip of Brooklyn, has also attracted the young and the fashionable with its moderate rents and cultural environment. Small frame houses and brick row houses share space with lofts on Norman Avenue whose advertisements extol the area's restaurants, shops and "lush greeneries."

But that image belies the longstanding environmental concerns. The worst stem from the oil spills, which went unnoticed until 1978 and spread petroleum beneath more than 52 acres of commercial and residential property. One source is believed to be an explosion in 1950 that spilled oil from refinery tanks owned by Standard Oil. But a federal study released last year said it was unclear whether the petroleum on the groundwater was the culmination of spills dating to the 1800s.

Residents, environmental groups and the state attorney general have lawsuits pending against Exxon Mobil over the spills, as well as over the thoroughness and pace of the cleanup. State officials came looking for vapor intrusion from spills in 2006. Mr. Desnoyers said they found none, but then happened on the new vapor intrusion threat this year.

Now, local environmentalists, community board members and others are asking for more aggressive outreach to assuage fears and get more people to open up their homes. The Newtown Creek Alliance, a local advocacy group, wrote letters last month to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, Gov. David A. Paterson and Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, saying that the airborne contaminants posed "an imminent and substantial endangerment to human health that must see immediate action."

The alliance said the vapor intrusion findings should bolster the case for designating Newtown Creek and adjacent areas as a Superfund site, a label reserved for the worst contamination in the country that draws federal cleanup money. An E.P.A. spokeswoman in New York City, Mary Mears, said the agency had been assessing the area to see if it qualified.

"This community has just had one environmental hit after another, and the hits just keep coming," said David Yassky, the area's representative on the City Council. "What you need here is the city and state and environmental agencies to have a coordinated response."

Mr. Friedman, who moved to Greenpoint in the mid-1990s, lured by other artists who already lived there, said the community could be divided into two camps: the old-timers

whose attitude is "we've been living here for years and we're fine," and those, like him, who "want to know what's going on."

He is a plaintiff in one of the lawsuits against Exxon Mobil. "I can't believe that gobs of oil underground is good, or even dry-cleaning chemical," he said.

Press & Sun-Bulletin December 14, 2008

New TCE tests planned in Hillcrest

HILLCREST - State environmental officials will contact two dozen residents in Hillcrest next month to seek permission to test their homes for traces of hazardous chemicals from nearby industry.

Over the past five years, officials installed systems on 123 properties in the area to divert vapors from an underground plume of trichloroethylene (TCE), while monitoring dozens of others.

Officials will request permission to retest seven homes, said Diane Carlton, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Environmental Conservation. Additionally, they will extend an offer to sample 17 homes whose owners declined or could not be reached last year.

The process involves testing air samples for TCE from underneath foundations, inside and outside of homes to determine whether vapors are passing into homes through a process called vapor intrusion. The testing is typically done during the winter, when windows are closed and furnaces are running, increasing the possibility of vapors seeping through foundations and collecting in buildings.

As efforts to block TCE from entering homes enters the final phase, state officials are considering ways to clean pollution from the ground, Carlton said. A report is being finalized and will be publicly available after it is completed, she said.

Efforts to fix the problem have been good, but could be better, said Bruce Oldfield, a Hillcrest resident and advocate for stricter regulations to protect residents from vapor intrusion. The state should provide systems to divert gases away from any homes over a TCE plume, regardless of whether it shows up in indoor air tests. That includes homes now being retested or monitored, he said.

"The crack in the basement might not be there this year, but it could be there next," he said. "The potential is there."

The work is part of a larger search for TCE near industrial neighborhoods throughout the state, including Vestal, Endicott and various places throughout the Town of Union. The search began in 2003, after scientists found a plume of TCE from the former IBM plant in Endicott - long thought to be trapped in the ground - was actually creating fumes that were tainting the air in nearby buildings.

TCE exposure is linked to illnesses ranging from cancer to brain damage. Scientists are trying to get a better understanding of risks associated with chronic exposure to low concentrations.

Childhood cancer clusters in Hillcrest and the Town of Union in the 1990s have added to the concern, although state health officials have been unable to link them to vapor intrusion or any particular cause.

Press & Sun-Bulletin December 21, 2008

State widens TCE search in Endicott

DEC seeks air samples from 100 more properties

UNION - A search for hazardous chemicals is expanding through residential neighborhoods in and around Endicott as officials prepare to take air samples from at least 100 more properties.

Letters have been sent to about 100 property owners in a neighborhood that stretches from June Street to the northwest all the way to South Loder Avenue and Main Street to the southeast. The letters ask permission for contractors from the state Depart-ment of Environmental Conser-vation to collect air samples below, outside and inside buildings this winter, said Ben Rung, a DEC engineer. DEC hopes to collect samples in at least 50 of the properties.

Another 100 letters have been sent to property owners elsewhere in the Town of Union where evidence of TCE pollution has raised suspicion. Contractors expect to collect samples from at least 50 or more additional properties in places to be determined.

The testing marks the beginning of the sixth year of the search for TCE hot spots in the Southern Tier.

Officials have long known many areas, including neighborhoods in Hillcrest and Endicott, were tainted by industrial solvents once commonly used by the microelectronics industry and other businesses. It wasn't until 2003, however, that they discovered the pollution - long thought to be trapped in the ground - was forming vapors that were rising through foundations through a process called vapor intrusion.

Since then, contractors working for the state and private industry have installed systems to whisk fumes from under more than 700 properties in Broome County. Those areas

include a cluster of 480 Endicott properties polluted by a plume of TCE coming from the former IBM plant, now owned by Huron Real Estate Associates.

Hillcrest, Union studied

Other areas include Hillcrest, where systems have been installed on more than 120 properties, and in the June Street area, where 30 systems were installed. About 30 more systems were installed in various other sites in Union, and 10 more installations are under way after tests earlier this year showed traces of vapors pushing their way under or into buildings, according to information from the DEC.

The DEC, using state Superfund money, is installing and maintaining the systems, which typically cost between $1,000 and $1,500 each. Property owners are left to pay the utility bill to power the motors that run non-stop to vent fumes from under the foundations. That costs between $80 and $100 per unit per year.

Properties now being cleaned in the June Street area include the West Endicott Baptist Church, on Wendell Street. Because of its size, the church will require up to four ventilation units under the foundation, and two more on neighboring church-owned properties, said the Rev. Robert McGehee.

The church board decided it was worth it. "We want to be as safe as possible," he said.

Not everybody is able to justify the cost, however. Rung has met people who have declined the systems, citing the cost.

"It certainly can be a factor," Rung said. "I've had that conversation with people, especially elderly people on fixed incomes."

The percentage of people who decline is typically low, he said.

Illnesses linked to TCE

Exposure to the once commonly used industrial solvent is associated with illnesses ranging from cancer to brain damage, and recently federal health officials determined that it is more toxic than once believed.

There is little consensus, however, about risks from exposures to small concentrations over extended periods. Scientists point out that some people are more vulnerable to illness than others.

Work to track and clean TCE in Union has exceeded $1 million in public money, based on reports from DEC and an unofficial tally using newspaper archives. IBM Corp. has spent tens of millions of dollars cleaning pollution south of the plant in Endicott.

Pollution has also been traced to a former Canada Dry bottling plant at 2 and 7 Badger Ave., a known hot spot since the mid-1990s, when engineers found TCE underground. Last year, it was added to the state's hazardous waste registry as Class II, which means it poses a significant threat to public health or the environment and requires action.

Scientists also are tracking other possible sources, including 312 Maple St., a former electronics manufacturing plant a quarter-mile west of the Badger Avenue site.

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle December 27, 2008

Testing for vapors set to begin in Scottsville

Contact lens maker CooperVision is in the midst of a third round of environmental tests near its plant in the village of Scottsville, trying to track vapors from industrial solvents that spilled or leaked over the years at the manufacturing facility.

State environmental officials said the next step will be indoor air testing at apartments and townhouses just east of the CooperVision facility, to determine if the vapors might be seeping into the buildings from the earth below.

"We're looking to make sure that round happens early in the new year," said Bart Putzig, regional hazardous waste remediation engineer for the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Two rounds of soil gas testing earlier this year traced the solvent vapors to the edge of the residential properties near Briarwood Lane and North Road in the village. Work that began this week, and is to conclude early next week, is meant to further characterize the spread of the underground vapors from the manufacturing sites.

The primary contaminant at the site, 1,1,1-trichloroethane, leaked from storage tanks at the site over a period of years, according to the DEC. The solvent, known as TCA, was used in the manufacture of contact lenses at the Scottsville plant from the mid-1970s through 1993.

TCA can cause dizziness or skin irritation in people who are exposed to high enough levels, though the health impacts of long-term exposure to low levels are less certain. The chemical is considered much less toxic than the better-known trichloroethene, or TCE.

Thomas Shone, president of CooperVision U.S., noting that TCA appears to be a "low-risk compound," said the company would continue to work closely with state officials. "We're committed to seeing this through," he said.

CooperVision is paying for the environmental work under a voluntary agreement with the DEC.

The contact lens plant was built by Union Corp. in 1974 and operated by that firm until its lens business was purchased by CooperVision in 1983.

Contamination was discovered in the groundwater and soil near the plant about 12 years ago, and the company underwrote study and some cleanup. Tests suggested the solvents hadn't spread beyond the company's property line, and there were no concerns about public exposure to the TCA because nearby residents drank piped-in water, not groundwater pumped from a well.

That all changed two or three years ago when the Scottsville site and hundreds like it around the state came under fresh scrutiny because of concerns about vapor intrusion.

For years, environmental officials nationwide had thought that solvents like TCA and TCE that contaminated the water table far below the surface could never rise in vapor form and reach the surface.

Relatively recent research showed that belief was wrong, and that gave rise to worries about what now is called vapor intrusion - the possibility that solvent vapors can rise through the soil, infiltrate buildings and, in some cases, accumulate in basements.

The DEC and CooperVision began talking about vapor intrusion at the site about two years ago, said Frank Sowers, the DEC's project manager. The company decided on its own to protect its employees by installing a system to prevent any building of solvent vapors in the plant, he said.

About a year ago, the parties began discussing the need to determine whether vapors were moving off-site, Sowers said. Soil-vapor sampling in April along Briarwood Lane found "higher than expected" levels of solvent vapors, according to a DEC fact sheet.

After an attempt to block one possible underground pathway by which vapors were leaving CooperVision's property, follow-up testing was done in October. "They found it hadn't made much of a change," Sowers said.

Asked what levels of vapors had been found, Putzig said only that he'd seen much higher levels at other sites.

He said it was impossible to estimate what sort of vapor levels might exist near the housing units based on findings on the company's property or along the road.

He said neighbors had been mailed a fact sheet about the latest testing in recent days, but the DEC had had no reaction from them as of Tuesday.

Putzig said the two townhouses and two apartment buildings closest to CooperVision will be tested first for vapor intrusion.

That work should be done by February. If results warrant it, sampling would be done at residential buildings farther east, he said.

Under a protocol developed by the DEC and state Department of Health in recent years, the air sampling results would determine whether mitigation systems are installed in any residences.

Typically, the systems draw in air and any chemical vapors from beneath the basement slabs, preventing them from seeping inside the structures.