Department of Toxic Substances Control

Preventing environmental damage from hazardous waste, and restoring contaminated sites for all Californians.

State of California

California Environmental Protection Agency

Fact Sheet, February 2007

Former Gibson Environmental Facility
Environmental Clean up Activities Update

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) has prepared this fact sheet to provide information on current site cleanup activities, which consist of removing shallow soil and groundwater contaminated with petroleum hydrocarbons at the former Gibson Environmental Facility (Gibson), 475 Seaport Boulevard, Port of Redwood City. This fact sheet contains information on the site background and proposed soil and groundwater remedies which were discussed in the June 2005 DTSC-approved Corrective Measures Study/Remedial Action Plan and at the Public Hearing held on September 28, 2005. The fact sheet also lists DTSC contacts information.

BACKGROUND

After Gibson abandoned the site in 1995, the Port of Redwood City began investigating and cleaning up petroleum contaminated wastewater and sludge left in the large aboveground storage tanks and soil and groundwater petroleum product contamination. The aboveground storage tanks have been emptied and recently removed. The next phase of site cleanup is to remove and properly dispose petroleum contaminated soil and groundwater. The shallow contaminated soil will be excavated and disposed at an approved disposal site. The contaminated groundwater will be extracted and treated on site. The treated groundwater will be discharged to the local sanitary sewer district, under permits from the South Bayside System Authority. The site will be backfilled with clean fill to bring it to proper grade. It is estimated that excavation and backfilling will take approximately 6 weeks to complete.

The Port of Redwood City (Port), as landowner of the facility, is responsible for proper closure of this site, abandoned by Gibson. These mandated closure and remedial activities are intended to be a long-term environmental solution.

During preliminary excavations, the Port and its contractors encountered the known contamination with expected foul smelling soil and groundwater. The Port and its contractors have developed and submitted a detailed Odor Control Plan and site Health and Safety Plan. DTSC has reviewed these plans and finds that their implementation should control odors and protect workers at or surrounding the site.

DTSC and the Port will hold a joint public meeting on this cleanup project if there is sufficient interest expressed by the community. Please address your comment or request for a public meeting to:

Wei-Wei Chui, Project Supervisor, Department of Toxic Substances Control, 700 Heinz Avenue, Berkeley, California 94710-2721, or wchui@dtsc.ca.gov, or 510-540-3975.

For questions or comments regarding odor control issues, please contact Jesus Cruz, DTSC Public Participation Specialist at 866-495-5651 or jcruz@dtsc.ca.gov.

You may also contact Mr. Don Snaman of the Port at 650-306-4150.

QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE:

WHAT IS CAUSING THAT FOUL ODOR?

The odors emanating from the site are volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from petroleum contaminated soil and free-floating petroleum product on top of the shallow groundwater exposed during soil and groundwater removal activities.

IS SOMEONE MONITORING THE AIR WHILE THE WORK IS GOING ON?

Yes. The airborne VOCs are being monitored in real-time using a handheld photo-ionization detector (PID). The PID air monitoring is performed every 30 minutes in the work area if no noticeable odors exist, and every 10 minutes after evidence of chemical contaminants or noticeable odors develop and recorded in the air monitoring logbook.

The air monitoring is conducted in and around the work area to protect the on-site workers and at numerous locations on the perimeter of the site, such as around the office buildings and parking lots to protect tenants in the surrounding office buildings.

WHAT ARE THE PLANS FOR ODOR CONTROL?

The Odor Control Plan includes covering contaminated soil piles and trenches with plastic sheeting and spraying contaminated soils with odor suppressant chemicals. Other additional odor control measures that would be employed include temporarily covering contaminated soil with a chemical soil seal or a long-duration foam. In extreme odor conditions, a system of perimeter misting devices would be installed that would distribute a coconut oil based odor masking agent.

The Odor Control Plan also includes modifying work activities to minimize odor releases and offsite exposure in response to ongoing air monitoring information and odor complaints.

The Port will do everything possible to control the odor. Normally, winds are blowing from the north and west and would cause the odors to migrate across the salt ponds and away from the office buildings. As an additional preventative measure to help us ensure that you are not bothered by the odors, we encourage tenants to keep their office doors and windows closed during the remaining excavation activities to further reduce the possibility of nuisance odors from site remediation activities entering the work space. This is strongly recommended during stormy weather conditions that cause the winds to blow from the south and east, across the site, to the neighboring office buildings. DTSC and the Port acknowledge that this is an inconvenience, and we appreciate your cooperation as it will allow us to expedite completion of the soil excavation.

WHAT IS THE HEALTH RISK ASSOCIATED WITH ODOR OR OTHER EMMISSIONS FROM THE SITE REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES?

The main health concern or risk factor in the emitted petroleum vapor is benzene. The Site Health and Safety Plan (H&SP) contains specific steps to monitor the air for benzene at the source and also at the perimeter of the facility. The H&SP also specifies the actions to be taken, in the event benzene emissions exceed specified threshold concentrations.

WHAT ACTIONS WILL THE PORT TAKE IF THE MONITOR DETECTS TOO MUCH CONTAMINATION IN THE AIR?

If there are concentrations of VOCs recorded by the PID that exceed the action level, the Health and Safety Plan and Odor Control Plan require certain actions to further protect human health and the environment. If the PID reads a sustained level (greater than 3 minutes) of VOCs greater than 2 parts per million (ppm), then the air is to be sampled specifically for benzene. If the level of benzene then exceeds 1 ppm, then the workers will need to put on respirators to filter out VOCs. If the level of benzene exceeds 2.5 ppm, then work is stopped and the impacted area will be evacuated. Since the beginning of site soil remediation activities began in January 2007, there has been no detection of benzene at fence line and no onsite detection of benzene at levels that would stop work.

Media inquiries should be directed to:
Ms. Angela Blanchette, DTSC Public Information Officer at (510) 540-3732 or Ablanche@dtsc.ca.gov