United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

EPA Begins Cleanup at Former Copper Facility

Calumet & Hecla Power Plant Site
Lake Linden, Michigan July 2012

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is overseeing an extensive cleanup project at the power plant site of a former copper mill on the shores of Torch Lake in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The cleanup at the Calumet & Hecla Power Plant began in mid-October 2011 with the installation of a fence around all but the lakeside portion of the property.

The work should be completed this December. Cleanup will include abatement and removal of asbestos-containing materials from current and former structures and removal of contaminated soil. Additional cleanup tasks include more assessment of conditions in the basement of the power plant building, including removal and treatment of abandoned containers and contaminated water.

An availability session for the public will be held July 23 *(see details left-hand box)*.

Work site safety

Contractors hired by Honeywell Specialty Materials LLC will be performing the cleanup work under EPA oversight. Several steps will be taken to protect the safety and health of residents and workers during the project. Site access will be limited to four controlled gates. As excavation, cleanup and demolition work proceeds around the 14-acre property, smaller control and decontamination areas will be set up for workers, materials and equipment leaving the area. Air monitoring will ensure workers and residents are protected from air pollution. During the project, residents may observe workers wearing protective suits and gear. An office trailer may also be set up on-site.

The badly dilapidated power plant is the only structure still standing on the C&H Power Plant site located on Highway M-26 along Torch Lake. People have been dumping household debris on the property, and the coal bin has collapsed.

Open house

EPA representatives will be available for one-on-one discussions about the cleanup on Monday, July 23, Lake Linden Village Hall, 401 Calumet St., 5 to 8 p.m.

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the cleanup at the former Calumet & Hecla power plant site, you can contact these EPA team members:

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On the Web:

www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/chpowerplant

Site background

The property is the former location of a large industrial complex that crushed or "stamped" rock from nearby copper mines. Stamping operations began around 1871. The power plant was built in 1905 and expanded over the next 25 years. C&H stopped operations in 1968. Honeywell Specialty Materials LLC is considered a potentially responsible party for the site and is managing the cleanup project.

The site is located on Highway M-26 in Houghton County just south of the village of Lake Linden near homes and businesses. Recreational areas sit to the north and south of the property. Some of the former plant area is bermed, and a walking trail along Torch Lake goes through the property.

Site pollution

Although the power plant is the only structure still standing, it is in dangerous condition with large holes in the roof and floor. Foundations from other structures, some of them flooded, still exist, and the site is littered with debris, slag, exposed copper waste called stamp sands and drums – some submerged.

A formal site investigation found a coal ash pile containing hazardous metals, asbestos-containing materials, bags of copper concentrate, a possible buried dumpsite and numerous drums, some empty and some containing unknown materials.

Work plan

In March, the more obvious asbestos-containing material was removed. In the coming months, after EPA approves the work plans submitted by Honeywell, the berms and debris piles will be removed followed by more soil sampling and regular reviews by EPA. Contaminated soil will be excavated with the last phase involving tearing down and clearing the site of the power plant itself.

Cleanup work may be expanded depending on what the sampling and tests find in the basement water, soil and debris piles.

Debris piles like this one containing drums and other possibly hazardous materials can be found around the former C&H Power Plant site. A cleanup project conducted by Honeywell under EPA supervision is ongoing and scheduled for completion this December.

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