
EPA Plans Urgent Cleanup Project at Abandoned School

Forest City High School & Ceramics Factory Site
Mason County, Illinois

January 2013

You're invited

The EPA will share details about the planned cleanup activities at the former Forest City H.S. campus at an **availability information session** scheduled:

Monday, Feb. 4, 2013

Fire Station/Village Hall
201 North Main St.
Forest City, IL
5 - 7 p.m.

For more information

You can contact these EPA team members for question, comments or more information about the cleanup in Forest City:

For general questions:

Teresa Jones

Community Involvement Coordinator
312-886-0725
800-621-8431, ext. 60725
jones.teresa@epa.gov

For technical questions:

Andrew Maguire

On-Scene Coordinator
312-353-8782
maguire.andrew@epa.gov

EPA Chicago Office address:

U.S. EPA Region 5
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

Website:

<http://epa.gov/region5/cleanup/forestcity/index.html>

Beginning in early February, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will begin an urgent cleanup removing asbestos and other hazardous materials and demolishing the abandoned former Forest City High School building. The former school is located at 409 SW Main St. in the village of Forest City. EPA expects the cleanup at the former public high school campus will cost more than \$550,000.

EPA will start what the Agency calls a "time-critical removal action," which is the cleanup process to deal with contamination that poses an imminent threat to the health and safety of nearby residents and the environment. EPA is conducting the removal under the emergency authority provided in federal law.¹ Cleanup activities are expected to last up to eight weeks.

Background

The Forest City High School opened in 1921 and closed in 1984. Nearly half of the 10-acre site is privately owned and was used to manufacture and sell ceramic products from 1984 to 1999. The remaining acres were deeded to the village of Forest City and currently serve as a park. The school and factory are now vacant. The police frequently respond to calls about trespassing and vandals at the site. The property is in a rural residential area near the park and agricultural land. The site is surrounded by the Lower Illinois-Lake Chautauqua watershed.



Various debris, asbestos tiles, and small containers located within the building are just a few of the dangerous problems discovered at the former Forest City High School & Ceramic Factory site.

¹EPA conducts time-critical cleanups in accordance with Section 104(a)(1) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), 42 U.S.C. §9604(a)(1); and 40 C.F.R. §300.415 of the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP).

EPA site inspection

EPA conducted an inspection in June 2012. Many containers and bulk materials were found containing flammable liquids and toxic substances, such as asbestos and lead. The 10-acre campus consisting of three buildings is in bad condition with a collapsed roof and broken glass. Containers were disorganized, unsecured and mislabeled. There were noticeable spills and potential for further release of hazardous materials. Contamination was also discovered in soil around the site. Weather conditions could potentially cause these pollutants to travel to other areas.

Inspectors determined the site poses an immediate hazard because of its close proximity to a park and residential homes and because of the ease of public access. EPA officials decided to secure the site and

conduct a cleanup of the property to protect the health and welfare of both the residents and the environment nearby.

Cleanup plan

Emergency cleanup activities at the site will include:

- Developing and implementing a site health and safety plan for residents and workers, including an air monitoring plan.
- Inventorying, analyzing, and categorizing all substances and dispose of materials at an approved off-site facility.
- As necessary, tearing down buildings, excavating soil and disposing of all materials in an approved off-site facility.
- Backfilling excavated area with clean fill.



Aerial view of the Forest City High School & Ceramic Factory site