
Old Gas Plant Site Undergoes EPA Cleanup

Ironwood Manufactured Gas Plant Site

Ironwood, Michigan

August 2012

You're invited

The EPA will share details about planned cleanup activities at the former Ironwood Manufactured Gas Plant at an **open house** starting at **5:30 p.m., Wednesday, Aug. 22**, at the Ironwood City Hall, 213 S. Marquette St. At the open house, people can visit with government representatives one-on-one.

The city of Ironwood, Western Upper Peninsula Health Department, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Community Health, and Wisconsin Department of Health Services are assisting with this cleanup effort.

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information contact these EPA team members:

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Read the documents:

More information can be found at www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/ironwood or at the information repository at the Ironwood Carnegie Library, 235 E. Aurora St.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's planned cleanup at the former Ironwood Manufactured Gas Plant will begin in August and continue for approximately three months. Hazardous substances from waste materials at the former plant site continue to move into the surrounding soil and ground water (underground water supplies) as well as to the surface water and sediment (mud) of the Montreal River. The property is located on the northwest corner of Hemlock and West Ayer streets in the Michigan Upper Peninsula town of Ironwood on the Wisconsin border.

The source of the pollution is buried coal tar and manufactured gas plant process waste. These hazardous substances are a mixture of several chemical compounds that are impacting the Montreal River and that have the potential to affect people's health.

A cleanup plan will be developed and put in place that includes health and safety procedures for workers and residents, air monitoring and emergency and site security. Waste will be identified, dug up, removed and properly disposed of. Contaminated ground water generated during digging activities will be collected, treated and disposed of. Areas that were dug up will be backfilled with clean materials and covered with natural vegetation.

During construction

Access from the site to the ATV trail next to the site will be closed during construction. The ATV trail will not be shut down but may be closed intermittently based on site construction activities. Cleanup work will take place alongside Ironwood's current street construction project. Heavy equipment will be used and efforts will be made to minimize truck traffic, dust and noise.



Photo shows the black vein of coal tar found in the soil of the former Ironwood manufactured gas plant. EPA will oversee a cleanup of the site this month. Before natural gas pipelines were laid in the area, the plant made gas from coal and distributed it to local homes and businesses in Michigan and Wisconsin.

Odors may be noticeable during the cleanup. Air quality will be carefully monitored during all of the work. You will see workers wearing protective equipment while removing hazardous materials.

Future use

After cleanup, the site will be safe to use as a green space of grass, trees and other vegetation. The property will have some use restrictions to make sure the cover over the site is not damaged.

Background

The Ironwood Manufactured Gas Plant began operating around 1911 and produced and distributed gas to the communities of Ironwood, Michigan, and Hurley, Wisconsin. The plant operated until the late 1950s when natural gas became available. Plant structures were demolished and removed in the 1970s and 1980s.

Workers discovered off-site coal tar contamination during the Norrie Street bridge construction project. In 2010, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducted comprehensive environmental studies at the former plant site and along the Montreal River. The results of MDEQ and WDNR's sampling showed the presence of hazardous substances. MDEQ and WDNR then requested assistance from EPA. EPA confirmed the presence of pollutants moving from

the former plant site and initiated planning for the cleanup. Michigan Department of Community Health determined the coal tar material and physical hazards at the site could harm people and recommended removal of visibly contaminated material.

The city of Ironwood, which owns the site, is cooperating and assisting with the cleanup.

More contacts

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Aerial view of the Ironwood MGP site, which is now owned by the city of Ironwood, Michigan.