

# EPA Considers Cleanup Steps At Former Industrial Site

## Prairie Ronde Realty (Former National Copper Products)

Dowagiac, Michigan

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### For more information

The following EPA team members can be contacted for questions, comments or more information about the Prairie Ronde Realty cleanup:

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### EPA's proposed remedy coming soon

EPA will be publishing the *Statement of Basis* document for the public to review soon. It will contain EPA's detailed proposed cleanup plan and can be read at Dowagiac District Library, 211 Commercial St.

The *Statement of Basis* and other information can also be found on the website:

<http://www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/rcra/NationalCopper/index.htm>

In the near future, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be proposing a final environmental cleanup at the Prairie Ronde Realty site (former Sundstrand Heat Transfer) located in Dowagiac. The owners of the facility have already taken many steps to protect human health and the environment. EPA officials are considering additional ways to protect workers on the site and nearby residents from pollution, including an environmental problem known as "vapor intrusion." Vapor intrusion can occur when underground supplies of water become contaminated and release hazardous gases. These gases can rise through the soil and seep into buildings and houses through foundation cracks and holes, causing unsafe indoor air pollution.

As a way to stop vapor intrusion, EPA experts may propose sub-slab depressurization systems for buildings on and off the site. More about these systems later in this fact sheet.

The proposed cleanup plan will be laid out in an EPA document called the *Statement of Basis*. That document will describe the proposed cleanup in detail and give the public a chance to comment on it. EPA will announce its availability in the newspaper when it's published.

The former copper tubing facility currently owned by Prairie Ronde Realty, or PRR, has been undergoing cleanup since 1984, first with oversight from the



*The Prairie Ronde Realty site boundary is outlined in black. The property has been appropriately restricted to industrial or commercial use only.*

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and then with EPA. PRR entered into a consent order, or legal agreement, with EPA in 2006. The Agency used its authority under a federal law called the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, or RCRA, to begin what is called a “corrective action.” Under the RCRA order, PRR has a responsibility to identify pollution on- and off-site that may pose a potential risk to human health and the environment.

EPA has determined groundwater beneath the site remains contaminated. “Groundwater” is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water. An MDEQ-approved remedial system to clean groundwater continues to operate. Fortunately, the groundwater in the area is not used for drinking water. The pollution consists of solvents, and the primary contaminant is a chemical called trichloroethene, or TCE. TCE easily evaporates or turns into a gas. Vapor intrusion can occur when the TCE gas rises through the soil. Some areas on and off the site test positive for contaminated soil gas. Soil gas consists of the air trapped between the underground soil particles. Presently, this soil gas does not pose a major threat to human health, but this issue needs to be tackled in future cleanup plans so it never becomes a problem.

### Site details

The PRR property was originally owned and operated by Hamilton Sundstrand (Sundstrand Heat Transfer). In the mid-1990s, Prairie Ronde Realty purchased the property and leased the facility to National Copper Products. In 2008, National Copper Products ceased operations. PRR has been leasing the building space for industrial and commercial uses since that time.

Investigations of site soil, groundwater, soil gas, nearby surface water and sediment (mud) have been completed. Contamination levels were compared or screened against appropriate risk-based health criteria. This included an investigation of the off-site wetlands and wildlife habitat around Pine Lake. For those areas where pollutant concentrations exceeded screening criteria and posed unacceptable health risks, remedies are being studied.

The proposed cleanup steps under consideration are consistent with the current and reasonable future use of the land, which will be commercial or industrial. Future use of the PRR property is controlled through a restriction placed on the property deed. This verifies people using the property in the future are aware of the site conditions. Further cleanup would be required if the property was to be used for purposes other than industrial or commercial.

### Cleanup details

A combination of final cleanup steps will be proposed for PRR to manage contamination on- and off-site. Some activities have already taken place to reduce health risks from pollutants. For example, contaminated soil on the property has been dug up, groundwater is collected and treated, and sub-slab depressurization systems are in place on-site and at one nearby residence. Groundwater is also treated in-place, underground, through the use of biodegradable materials. A major priority of the final cleanup plan when it is released will be to reduce groundwater and soil gas contamination. Here are some of the steps EPA is considering for the final cleanup plan that could be proposed in the *Statement of Basis*:

- Continued operation of the groundwater pump-and-treat system. The system draws groundwater into its wells, transports it to a treatment plant, and discharges the clean water.
- Expansion of the "enhanced reductive dechlorination" studies that have been done. This remedy includes injecting safe, biodegradable materials into the groundwater. These materials break down the contamination and leave behind safe byproducts, such as carbon dioxide.
- As mentioned above, additional sub-slab depressurization systems are being considered for buildings and houses on and off the site. These systems are similar to radon mitigation methods found in many Midwestern houses to reduce radon levels. A sub-slab system would be installed to prevent the soil gas sitting beneath a house or building from entering the structure.
- PRR will have to modify the long-term monitoring plan and show EPA it can financially complete the cleanup.

### Next steps

EPA will be proposing the cleanup steps for the Prairie Ronde Realty site in the *Statement of Basis* document. The Agency will publish this document for the public's consideration and provide people an opportunity to comment. People are encouraged to learn about the site and offer their input. EPA could change or modify any cleanup plans based on public opinions.

See the box on the front page for sources of more information.

EPA will publish a notification in the local newspaper when the *Statement of Basis* is available. We look forward to your input.

