

SUPERFUND

Microfab Site Amesbury, MA

U.S. EPA | HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM AT EPA NEW ENGLAND



THE SUPERFUND PROGRAM protects human health and the environment by investigating and cleaning up often-abandoned hazardous waste sites and engaging communities throughout the process. Many of these sites are complex and need long-term cleanup actions. Those responsible for contamination are held liable for cleanup costs. EPA strives to return previously contaminated land and groundwater to productive use.

INTRODUCTION:

The Microfab Site is located at 104 Haverhill Street in Amesbury, MA. The approximately 14 acre Site was formerly the location of Microfab, Inc, which manufactured printed circuit boards, performed electroplating, and related operations from 1967 to 1987. The Site consists of the Microfab property and wetland areas to the south and southwest. The company that ran the business no longer exists and the Site has been abandoned since 1987.

HISTORICAL CONTAMINATION AND SITE WORK

When in operation, Microfab's wastewater treatment plant discharged to an unnamed stream on the west side of the property from 1977 until 1987. Prior to 1977, untreated wastewater was discharged directly to an on-Site wetland adjacent to the unnamed stream. As a result, sediments on the property and downstream are contaminated with heavy metals such as arsenic, chromium and copper. A large area of the stream sediments next to the former facility contains high levels of arsenic. This area was fenced and is currently maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) to prevent access and exposure to the contaminated sediments.

In addition, groundwater, soil, and surface water at the Site are contaminated with elevated levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), primarily trichloroethylene (TCE). TCE is a common VOC found at waste Sites, used extensively in industrial operations for degreasing. MassDEP has spent over two million dollars on Site assessment and remediation activities at the Site, including the installation in 1991 of a groundwater recovery and treatment system that operated until 2012. In 2005, MassDEP conducted an ecological risk assessment at the Site. The Ecological Risk Characterization concluded that heavy metals in sediment, copper in particular, were causing harm to the ecosystem throughout the impacted portion of the watershed.

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CURRENT STATUS

Although the groundwater recovery/treatment system was successful in removing thousands of pounds of VOCs from the groundwater over the period it operated, concentrations of VOCs in groundwater remain elevated. These concentrations extend beyond the property boundary into the wetland, beyond the intended scope of treatment from the groundwater recovery wells. Since the Site has been abandoned for over 25 years, the 48,000 square foot multi-story building is not structurally sound and is a safety hazard. Given the age of the building, there may also be hazardous materials, such as asbestos, present inside.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES (ALSO KNOWN AS “SUPERFUND”) LISTING

The Town of Amesbury and MassDEP have exhausted resources to further investigate and clean up the Site. In the fall of 2014, MassDEP requested the assistance of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to evaluate this Site for possible inclusion on the National Priorities List (NPL). At the request of MassDEP, EPA is preparing necessary documentation to propose the Microfab Site to the NPL in order to complete a detailed Site investigation and clean up. EPA's initial evaluation of the Site confirmed that it is eligible to be listed and cleaned up under the Superfund program.



Fenced in area surrounding the Microfab Site

NEXT STEPS

The EPA and MassDEP have met with the Town of Amesbury and plan to attend the City Council Meeting on February 23rd to provide information about the NPL and the possible inclusion of the Microfab Site on the NPL. EPA requires a letter of support from the Governor prior to adding a Site to the NPL. EPA and Mass DEP are working with the City of Amesbury to inform the local community and determine the community's support for listing. After a Site is proposed to the NPL, a formal public comment period is held. Following the comment period, Sites are then finalized on the NPL.