

Frequently Asked Questions
Former Barbera Residence (a.k.a Port Refinery)
Rye Brook, Westchester County
DEC Site No. 360033

Acronyms and Abbreviations

DEC	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
DOH	New York State Department of Health
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
CAMP	Community Air Monitoring Plan
ppm	parts per million
mg/kg	milligram per kilogram

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Where is the site and What is the Source of Contamination?

The residential property located at 55 Hillandale Road (the “site”), also known as the Former Barbera Residence, was historically used to operate a mercury refinery business (Port Refinery Co., Inc.). The business operated out of a garage on the property for about 20 years, until the early 1990s. These operations resulted in mercury contaminating soil, water, and sediment on and in the vicinity of the site (i.e., neighboring properties where mercury contamination was identified via sampling in soil, water, sediment, and/or vapors/air).

What are the features around the site?

The site is situated in a residential neighborhood, primarily including single-family homes. The Arbors townhouse complex is located north of the property beyond an asphalt walking path known as Blind Brook Meadowlark Path. The Blind Brook Middle/High School is located less than 0.1 mile north of the site.

Water from a stormwater retention basin at The Arbors flows through open channels and underground pipes to nearby drainage areas, including small ponds and creeks on properties to the southwest. This drainage system continues from the site area through Rich Manor Park and eventually flows into the Blind Brook.

What is the contaminant of concern?

Mercury is the contaminant of concern.

What is mercury?

Mercury is a naturally occurring chemical element found in rock in the earth's crust, including in deposits of coal. It exists in several forms:

- Elemental (metallic) mercury
- Inorganic mercury compounds
- Methylmercury and other organic compounds

The primary type of mercury contamination at the site and expanded area of interest being investigated was elemental mercury generated from past refining operations at the site.

What is the site status?

The site is under investigation by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). DEC is doing more sampling to ensure public health and the environment are protected.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) completed removal actions for mercury contamination at the site from 1991 through 1996 and 2004 through 2007. This included demolition of the original home and garage, which have subsequently been rebuilt following a cleanup. Clean fill and topsoil replaced all contaminated soil removed during these activities. Following the second removal action, no known soil concentrations remained above EPA's 10 parts per million (ppm) removal action limit for mercury. In 2022, as part of a site review, additional sampling was performed by EPA that included sampling indoor air and water and sediment from surface water and residential sumps. The results of the sampling event showed that residual mercury is still present on-site and in immediately surrounding areas (offsite). Using the data from the 2022 investigation, EPA performed a human health risk assessment and determined that remaining concentrations did not pose a health risk. EPA also performed an ecological risk evaluation and determined that more investigation was necessary to determine if the residual mercury impacts were a threat to the environment, particularly ecological receptors. In January 2026, EPA determined, based on all available information, that conditions at the site did not meet the federal requirements for additional federal removal action and management of the site was transferred to DEC. DEC subsequently reclassified the site as a "Potential" Inactive Hazardous Waste site (commonly referred to as a "P-site") and initiated plans for further investigation. Currently, DEC and its contractor, CDM Smith, are preparing for field activities including finalizing a site characterization work plan and securing access agreements for private properties to perform the additional sampling.

What is the extent of off-site contamination?

Based on EPA's data, residual off-site contamination is present in groundwater, sediment, surface water, and indoor air containing mercury at concentrations at levels greater than NYS's stringent standards. This contamination likely migrated off-site through groundwater and via a nearby tributary to the Blind Brook from mercury source areas at and in close proximity to the site itself. Therefore, DEC, in consultation with NYS Department of Health (DOH), is doing more sampling to evaluate present conditions and determine the extent of residual contamination, and based on the results, determine whether additional cleanup is warranted.

What is hazardous waste?

Hazardous waste is a waste that exhibits properties (e.g., toxicity, ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity) that make it potentially dangerous or capable of harming human health and/or the environment. Hazardous waste is generated from many sources, ranging from industrial manufacturing process waste to commercial uses, such as dry cleaning. Hazardous waste can be in many forms, including liquid, solid, gas, and sludge. Additional references include: [Learn the Basics of Hazardous Waste | US EPA](#); DEC -

[6 NYCRR Part 375-1.2\(x\), Environmental Remediation Programs](#) and <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/100401.html>).

If EPA cleaned up the site, why is DEC doing more work?

Results from EPA's most recent sampling event in 2022 showed that mercury is still present onsite and offsite, in immediately surrounding areas. EPA concluded that the levels detected during their investigation did not represent a threat to human health but may potentially represent a threat to the environment. DEC is doing more investigation to determine what current levels of mercury are present on and offsite to ensure public health and the environment are protected.

Will EPA still be involved with this site?

EPA transferred management of the site to DEC in January of 2026. DEC will manage the site going forward.

What environmental samples will DEC collect?

DEC will collect soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, and soil vapor/indoor air samples onsite and offsite to determine the current remaining levels of mercury in these media and the areal and vertical extent of remaining contamination associated with the site. DEC and DOH will utilize this information to determine if additional cleanup is warranted.

Soil borings will be advanced and groundwater monitoring wells will be installed in the public right-of-way to reduce impacts on the community. Co-located surface water and sediment samples will be collected from the nearby ponds and streams south and west of the site. The results of the soil, groundwater and surface water samples will inform the locations where indoor air sampling will be recommended.

When will sampling take place?

Sampling is scheduled to start in September 2026. DEC expects all field work to be completed by Spring of 2027. Further sampling may be needed based on initial sampling results.

Does DEC need access to my property to sample? Can I request that my property be sampled?

DEC asks private property owners to sign Access Agreement forms that let DEC sample their private property. **If you have not been contacted directly but want to request sampling, please contact** DEC Project Manager Michaela Cochran at (518) 402-9669 or Michaela.Cochran@dec.ny.gov or DOH Project Manager Sarita Wagh at (518) 402-7860 or Sarita.Wagh@health.ny.gov. After you request sampling DEC will

evaluate your property location, checking the historical data/area of potential concern, to determine if sampling is scientifically warranted.

What will the work schedule be?

Work will occur Monday through Friday, with equipment operating from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. As per the regulations of the Village of Rye Brook, work may be completed on “weekdays (except holidays) between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. or dusk, whichever is earlier.

What will the properties look like after sampling?

DEC’s contractor will take photographs before sampling and return the properties to their pre-sampling condition. Each boring hole will be filled and the ground surface restored to its previous condition, replacing any grass or sod. The surface will be re-graded by hand, as needed. The team will let property owners know when the restoration work is complete.

When and where will sampling results be made available?

A Site Characterization report will be available on the [DEC website](#) once all site investigation activities are complete and all data is evaluated. This report, all other site-related workplans and reports, can be found here:

<https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/360033/>.

Please note that any data collected on private property will be shared with the owner before it is released to the public. Please note that any identifying information related to sampling on private properties, including names, addresses, and personal emails/phone numbers, will not be disclosed by DEC.

How can I get a copy of my results?

Once DEC and DOH review and approve the report, the results will be shared with the property owners, the Village of Rye Brook, and will also be posted on the [DEC project website](#). Please note that certain data, such as indoor air data collected inside a home, is considered private information and will not be publicly released. In addition, any identifying information related to sampling on private properties, including names, addresses, and personal emails/phone numbers, will also not be disclosed by DEC in accordance with the Personal Privacy Protection Law.

Will this environmental work affect property values?

DEC does not determine property values and cannot speak to property value because property value fluctuates based on many factors, including location, property characteristics, market conditions, and broader economic factors.

Will the nearby Blind Brook Middle/High School campus be investigated?

The Blind Brook Middle/High School campus is located upgradient of known mercury disposal and cleanup areas located around 55 Hillandale Rd. DEC does not currently expect site-related impacts at the school property. However, out of an abundance of caution, additional samples will be collected from school property to confirm the property is unimpacted. Results will be shared with the school district and community once sample analyses and data validation are complete.

How will the community and schools be kept informed about the status of the investigation?

DEC will update the [webpage](#) dedicated to the Former Barbera Residence site. The webpage includes a site description, recent updates, links to site documents, and contact information for site project managers.

Routine updates will include summaries of the investigation and cleanup work (if needed) performed. The webpage will include new site documents as they are completed and become publicly available. DEC will issue Community Updates at key milestones via “DEC Delivers” service. Sign up for updates in Westchester County by visiting: [https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/site-cleanup/regional-remediation-project information/environmental-cleanup-email-newsletters](https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/site-cleanup/regional-remediation-project-information/environmental-cleanup-email-newsletters).

What will happen to the excess material/waste produced by sampling activities?

The sampling team will contain excess soil and water not used for analytical purposes in 55-gallon drums. The sampling team will label the drums and lock them in a storage unit until a licensed waste hauler can pick up the drums and take them to an authorized waste handling/disposal facility. Any trash (e.g., protective gloves) generated during sampling will be contained and properly disposed of off-site.

What does this mean for the surrounding community?

EPA’s risk assessment concluded that residual contamination did not pose a risk to human health. Once the extent of the remaining contamination is defined, the results will be communicated to property owners and to the public, and additional cleanup measures will be recommended, if appropriate.

All soil contains naturally occurring metals and microorganisms and, therefore, it is always a good idea to minimize contact with soil, whether it is potentially contaminated or not. In general, it is possible for a person to come into incidental contact with contaminants in the soil through home maintenance and recreational activities. The following actions can reduce the risk of incidental contact:

- Maintain a grass or mulch cover to help prevent direct contact with the soil,
- Avoid unnecessary digging in the dirt,
- Wash your hands after outdoor activities, and
- Use doormats to help reduce exposure to outdoor soil that might be tracked indoors, and mop floors periodically.

Is my drinking water affected by the contamination?

No. The Village of Rye Brook is served by the Veolia Water New York public water system that obtains water from a different source not affected by this contamination. See the [Veolia Water New York](http://www.veolia.com) website to learn about drinking water quality.

Can we use The Arbors walking path?

When EPA cleaned up areas where mercury contamination was found, they placed clean topsoil in these areas. Along the Blind Brook Meadowlark Path, they also reconstructed a rock pile and replaced the asphalt walkway. These actions limit the potential for contact with residual contamination that may remain below the surface.

However, out of an abundance of caution, DEC will sample surficial soils along the path to determine if residual mercury contamination is present.

Can I plant a garden? Should I eat vegetables grown in my garden?

Eating home-grown vegetables is a personal decision. Until the area has been properly characterized, DEC/DOH cannot answer these questions. DOH recommends best practices (described below) that can be followed to reduce the potential for exposure to substances that may be present in the soil.

- Consider growing vegetables in raised beds with clean soil (at least ten inches deep). Use untreated wood to make the beds. Pressure-treated wood and railroad ties contain added chemicals.
- Wear gloves when working in the garden and avoid bringing soil inside the house. Brush off your clothes and remove shoes and gloves.
- Wash with soap and water after gardening or any time before you eat.
- Always wash or rinse fruits and vegetables before eating them.
- Peel below-ground vegetables (e.g., carrots and potatoes) and those grown in close contact with the soil (e.g., cucumbers).
- Remove outside leaves of leafy head vegetables (e.g., lettuce and cabbage) that may have soil particles stuck to them.

For additional information about healthy gardening go to:

<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1301/>.

What safety measures will the contractor take to ensure that potential hazards are monitored during the field work?

Care will be taken to minimize the disturbance of soil, sediment, and water during sampling activities. DEC's contractor will deploy a community air monitoring plan (CAMP). They will set up CAMP stations measuring mercury vapors and dust both up- and down-wind of the work locations and will be alerted via alarms if action levels are exceeded. Station locations will be adjusted as needed to account for wind direction and changing conditions. DEC does not expect mercury vapors or dust to be a concern given the sampling approaches; however, the Site Characterization Work Plan includes actions to be implemented in the case of exceedances (e.g., stop work and apply corrective actions such as water to reduce airborne dust).

Will the drilling be loud?

People standing outside the work zone will not need hearing protection. The drill rig itself will be over 80 decibels, so the operators and field staff next to it will wear hearing protection. Drilling will occur on weekdays, between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. If a resident is inside their home, they will hear some noise but there will not be a danger to their hearing. Like any construction project, residents may hear back up alarms and gas-powered engines.