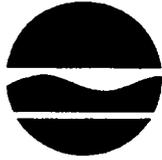


File, RCRA, 401062.

2004-5-25.

Fact Sheet

**NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF**



**ENVIRONMENTAL
CONSERVATION**

For more information, call:

**Mr. Victor Valaitis
NYSDEC
(518) 402-8594**

**Ms. Charlotte Bethoney
NYSDOH
(518) 402-7860**

**Mr. Paul Rappleyea
Environmental & Safety
Saint-Gobain Abrasives
(518) 226-2319**

- Fact Sheet -

Alden Street Groundwater Contamination

Town of Colonie, New York

INTRODUCTION

Saint Gobain Abrasives, Inc. (Saint-Gobain), a former owner of the facility also known as the Kendall, Norton or Nashua facility, has been working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) and the Albany County Department of Health to evaluate the residual contamination from a chemical release that occurred at the facility in the late 1960s. Recent groundwater investigations have identified a narrow band of residual toluene in groundwater which extends northward from the site. The most recent sampling has shown that this band extends to the north (residential) side of Alden Street. Future investigations will further define the nature and extent of this contamination. The investigations will place particular emphasis on determining whether the contamination has migrated beneath the residential properties, and whether this contamination has the potential to impact residential indoor air quality.

BACKGROUND

On June 11, 2002, the NYSDEC signed a consent order with the Norton Company to investigate past releases at the facility located at 2600 Seventh Avenue in the Town of Colonie (just north of the City of Watervliet).

From the mid-1930s until 1974, the Norton Company manufactured adhesive tape at this plant located just south of Alden Street. Toluene was used at the site as a solvent in the production process. Norton sold the tape plant to the Nashua Corporation in 1974. Nashua continued to manufacture tape at the facility until the mid-1990s. An underground pipe leaked toluene at the plant in the late 1960s during Norton's ownership. This release is suspected to be the source of the toluene found in the groundwater in the Alden Street area.

Production was stopped in 1997 and the facility was closed. There is now a warehouse on the site. Toluene has not been used at the site since manufacturing operations stopped in 1997. Saint-Gobain, which acquired the Norton Company in 1990, maintains a separate plant site in Watervliet at 2600 Tenth Avenue. This facility does not currently use toluene. There is no known connection between the toluene that was recently detected and the Tenth Avenue facility.

Q: What is toluene and how does it affect health?

A: Toluene is an organic compound used in various industrial manufacturing processes, and is frequently used as a solvent. It is also present in gasoline, fuel oil and some paints. Automobile emissions also release toluene into the air. There is no convincing evidence from studies in humans or animals that toluene causes cancer. Toluene may affect the nervous system and inhalation of low to moderate levels can cause tiredness, confusion, weakness, drunken-type actions, memory loss, nausea, loss of appetite, and hearing and color vision loss. Inhalation of high levels of toluene in a short period of time can make you feel light-headed, dizzy or sleepy. Additional information about toluene is provided in the attached fact sheet prepared by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

Q: What has been done to determine if there is toluene in the neighborhood?

A: The current investigation is being conducted by Saint-Gobain under the direction of the NYSDEC. The investigation began in 2001 and has been implemented in several phases to define the extent of contamination. In 2002, after toluene was detected on-site, the investigation was expanded to determine if the contamination was also present off-site. To date, the investigation has found a narrow band (approximately twenty feet wide) of toluene contaminated groundwater extending northward off-site and beneath Alden Street. Immediately after this finding was confirmed, State and County health officials visited nearby residents in August 2004 to notify them of the situation and inform them that testing will be conducted to determine if this contamination extends beneath nearby residential properties.

Q: Should we be concerned?

A: We won't have a full understanding of the situation until additional tests are completed and the results are analyzed. Homeowners will be informed as results become available. Testing may need to be done inside homes (with the home owners permission). The NYSDEC, the New York State and the Albany County Health departments, in cooperation with Saint-Gobain are working together to quickly investigate contaminant migration and evaluate potential exposure to the residents of the Alden Street neighborhood.

Q: How could toluene get into my house?

A: If toluene is present in high amounts in the soil and/or water under a home, it is possible that vapors could enter through cracks in slabs or basement floors and through openings where pipes and wires go through the foundation.

Q: What if toluene is found in my home?

A: Removing toluene vapors from a residential structure can be accomplished relatively easily. Typically, all cracks and openings in the foundation are sealed and a ventilation system is installed to remove the vapors from underneath the foundation and exhaust them to the outside of the home. (This is similar to the procedure that is used to address radon gas when it is present in a residence).

Q: If my home needs a ventilation system, who will pay for it?

A: Saint-Gobain will make the necessary arrangements and will pay for the systems.

Q: What about the drinking water in our neighborhood?

A: Drinking water is supplied through the public water system, not through local groundwater. There are currently no known private drinking water wells in your neighborhood. However, if you do have a private well, please notify the NYSDOH or the NYSDEC as soon as possible. After approval of testing protocols, Saint-Gobain will make the necessary arrangements to test the well at no cost to you.

Q: When will we be advised of the results of your testing and provided with information on the full extent of the contamination?

A: Additional soil, water and possibly air samples will be collected. After the laboratory analysis is completed (approximately two to three weeks following sampling), test results from any samples obtained from your property will be sent directly to you. Also, an updated fact sheet will be provided to the community upon completion of the above testing.

February 2001

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ATSDR RESOURCES

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ToxFAQs™ for Toluene (*Tolueno*)

CAS# 108-88-3

This fact sheet answers the most frequently asked health questions about toluene. For more information, you may call the ATSDR Information Center at 1-888-422-8737. This fact sheet is one in a series of summaries about hazardous substances and their health effects. This information is important because this substance may harm you. The effects of exposure to any hazardous substance depend on the dose, the duration, how you are exposed, personal traits and habits, and whether other chemicals are present.

HIGHLIGHTS: Exposure to toluene occurs from breathing contaminated workplace air, in automobile exhaust, some consumer products paints, paint thinners, fingernail polish, lacquers, and adhesives. Toluene affects the nervous system. Toluene has been found at 959 of the 1,591 National Priority List sites identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

What is toluene?

Toluene is a clear, colorless liquid with a distinctive smell. Toluene occurs naturally in crude oil and in the tolu tree. It is also produced in the process of making gasoline and other fuels from crude oil and making coke from coal.

Toluene is used in making paints, paint thinners, fingernail polish, lacquers, adhesives, and rubber and in some printing and leather tanning processes.

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What happens to toluene when it enters the environment?

- Toluene enters the environment when you use materials that contain it. It can also enter surface water and groundwater from spills of solvents and petroleum products as well as from leaking underground storage tanks at gasoline stations and other facilities.
- When toluene-containing products are placed in landfills or waste disposal sites, the toluene can enter the soil or water near the waste site.
- Toluene does not usually stay in the environment long.
- Toluene does not concentrate or buildup to high levels in animals.

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How might I be exposed to toluene?

- Breathing contaminated workplace air or automobile exhaust.
- Working with gasoline, kerosene, heating oil, paints, and lacquers.
- Drinking contaminated well-water.
- Living near uncontrolled hazardous waste sites containing toluene products.

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How can toluene affect my health?

Toluene may affect the nervous system. Low to moderate levels can cause tiredness, confusion, weakness, drunken-type actions, memory loss, nausea, loss of appetite, and hearing and color vision loss. These symptoms usually disappear when exposure is stopped.

Inhaling High levels of toluene in a short time can make you feel light-headed, dizzy, or sleepy. It can also cause unconsciousness, and even death.

High levels of toluene may affect your kidneys.

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How likely is toluene to cause cancer?

Studies in humans and animals generally indicate that toluene does not cause cancer.

The EPA has determined that the carcinogenicity of toluene can not be classified.

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How does toluene affect children?

It is likely that health effects seen in children exposed to toluene will be similar to the effects seen in adults.

Some studies in animals suggest that babies may be more sensitive than adults.

Breathing very high levels of toluene during pregnancy can result in children with birth defects and retard mental abilities, and growth. We do not know if toluene harms the unborn child if the mother is exposed to low levels of toluene during pregnancy.

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How can families reduce the risk of exposure to toluene?

Use toluene-containing products in well-ventilated areas.

When not in use, toluene-containing products should be tightly covered to prevent evaporation into the air.

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Is there a medical test to show whether I've been exposed to toluene?

There are tests to measure the level of toluene or its breakdown products in exhaled air, urine, and blood. To determine if you have been exposed to toluene, your urine or blood must be checked within 12 hours of exposure. Several other chemicals are also changed into the same breakdown products as toluene, so some of

these tests are not specific for toluene.

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Has the federal government made recommendations to protect human health?

EPA has set a limit of 1 milligram per liter of drinking water (1 mg/L).

Discharges, releases, or spills of more than 1,000 pounds of toluene must be reported to the National Response Center.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has set a limit of 200 parts toluene per million of workplace air (200 ppm).

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References

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2001. *Managing Hazardous Materials Incidents. Volume III – Medical Management Guidelines for Acute Chemical Exposures: Toluene*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). 2000. *Toxicological Profile for toluene. Update*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.

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Where can I get more information?

ATSDR can tell you where to find occupational and environmental health clinics. Their specialists can recognize, evaluate, and treat illnesses resulting from exposure to hazardous substances. You can also contact your community or state health or environmental quality department if you have any more questions or concerns.

For more information, contact:

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Division of Toxicology
1600 Clifton Road NE, Mailstop F-32
Atlanta, GA 30333
Phone: 1-888-42-ATSDR (1-888-422-8737)
FAX: (770)-488-4178
Email: ATSDRIC@cdc.gov

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ATSDR Information Center / ATSDRIC@cdc.gov / 1-888-422-8737

This page was updated on May 25, 2004