



Project Update

Public Availability Session Announcement

Fort Edward Soil Gas Investigation

**GE Fort Edward Plant Site
Site No. 5-58-004**

Introduction:

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) are providing this update to keep the public informed about the progress of the ongoing soil gas investigation related to the GE Fort Edward plant site.

NYSDEC and NYSDOH also want to inform the public that data will be provided to property owners who have had their properties sampled during the week of April 4, and offers to install sub-slab depressurization systems to property owners will be made during the week of April 4 as well.

NYSDEC and NYSDOH will be holding a public availability session on April 14, 2005 from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm and from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm at the Fort Edward fire station to answer questions from the public in an informal setting about the progress of the investigation, and to describe the process for providing sampling results to homeowners and to describe the process of offering mitigation. The public may attend at their convenience during the times listed above.

The date by which property owners may request sampling of their homes and businesses, and for property owners to provide written permission for sampling, has been extended to April 18, 2005.

Background:

The GE Fort Edward plant is located on a 32-acre property on Broadway in the Town of Fort Edward. Historically, GE used trichloroethene (also referred to as trichloroethylene or TCE) in the manufacture of electrical equipment at the site. Historical operations resulted in the release of TCE to the environment, impacting groundwater quality at the site as well as certain off-site locations. In addition to TCE, other volatile organic compounds (VOCs) originating from the site have been detected in groundwater in a limited area in the northwest corner of the site.

Over the past 20 years, GE has implemented several environmental clean-up programs at the facility that have controlled further movement of TCE-impacted groundwater off the site and have effectively reduced the concentration of TCE in the groundwater. Although significant progress has been made, site-related VOCs continue to be found in shallow groundwater in two areas: south of the site extending six blocks south of the site and in the northwestern area of the site near Building 40.

NYSDOH and NYSDEC requested that GE evaluate whether site-related VOCs in groundwater are evaporating and entering the overlying soil layer. Groundwater containing site-related VOCs can release gases into the pore spaces of overlying soil. These gases can migrate toward and into overlying off-site buildings. Based upon recent experience from other sites in New York State, and across the nation, NYSDEC and NYSDOH believed that it is appropriate to investigate the possibility that VOCs could be entering structures in the vicinity of shallow groundwater containing VOCs near the GE facility.

Progress of investigation:

GE has completed the initial soil gas sampling work and groundwater sampling work outlined in the approved Work Plan. The soil gas investigation work was performed primarily around the perimeter of the study area to determine the boundaries of the VOC contaminated soil gas plume. The soil gas sample locations were along Park Avenue, along the west side of Broadway, on the western ends of Hillview Avenue and Griffen Avenue, on the western portion of commercial properties on Broadway (east of the Sullivan Parkway), and along the western GE plant site boundary near Lower Allen Street. Nine of the 16 soil gas survey samples did not contain detectable concentrations of VOCs. Additional soil gas sampling will be done to delineate the outer boundary of the soil gas plume.

Shallow groundwater samples were also collected at eight of the soil gas survey sample locations in order to help better understand the current extent of the contaminated groundwater plume and the potential relationship between groundwater and soil gas. None of the groundwater samples contained detectable concentrations of site-related VOCs.

The program also includes the sampling of homes and businesses within the study area upon request of the respective property owners. More than 40 property owners have requested sampling at their homes or commercial properties since the program commenced on March 2, 2005. The sampling at these properties is ongoing. NYSDEC and NYSDOH have received some of the preliminary analytical results from this sampling. Some of the results indicate that site-related VOCs are present under structures within the study area. The preliminary sample results are being provided to the property owners.

The date by which property owners may request sampling of their homes and businesses, and for property owners to provide written permission for sampling, has been extended to April 18, 2005.

Provision of data to property owners:

GE proposed to NYSDEC and NYSDOH that the preliminary data be provided to property owners. GE will begin contacting property owners during the week of April 4 to provide the data. GE has also proposed to begin making offers during the week of April 4 for installation of sub-slab depressurization systems to property owners within the defined limits of where site-related VOCs have been delineated to date in soil gas in the study area. NYSDEC and NYSDOH agree with this approach.

Public Participation:

NYSDEC and NYSDOH will be conducting a public availability session on April 14, 2005 to provide the public with an opportunity to learn more about the status of the Fort Edward soil gas investigation. NYSDOH and NYSDEC staff will be available from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm and from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm at Fort Edward fire station). Information concerning available testing results, next steps, and mitigation systems will be made available to the public. The public will also be able to get information related to any health issues that they may have, and will have the opportunity to get answers to questions that may exist related to the investigation and mitigation program.

Information Repositories:

Washington County Office Building
Upper Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828
Hours: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

New York State Department of Environmental
Conservation
625 Broadway, 12th Floor
Albany, NY 12233
Hours: 8:30 am - 4:45 pm

Contact Information:

At any time, the public can contact the project staff to ask questions or obtain information about the soil gas investigation and mitigation program. The contact information for NYSDEC, NYSDOH, or GE project staff is as follows:

Kevin Farrar
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 12th Floor
Albany, NY 12233
(518) 402-9778
kxfarrar@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Deanna Ripstein
New York State Department of Health
547 River Street
Troy, NY 12180
(518) 402-7850
dmr13@health.state.ny.us

Joan Gerhardt
GE Community Affairs
(518) 792-1958
joan.gerhardt@behancom.com

Request for information received from the Town of Fort Edward:

Supervisor Marilyn Pulver of the Town of Fort Edward has provided NYSDEC and NYSDOH a list of questions she has heard from the public. NYSDEC and NYSDOH are providing responses to the questions from Supervisor Pulver along with this project update document. The questions and corresponding responses are provided below.

Question: Is well water safe to use for a) drinking, b) irrigation for vegetables, c) bathing, d) swimming?

Response: The NYSDEC and NYSDOH are not aware of anyone utilizing a private well, that is located over the current groundwater contamination plume, for drinking water purposes. The NYSDOH always recommends that property owners connect to a public water supply, where one is available, because it is routinely monitored and must comply with federal and state public drinking water standards in accordance with the NYSDOH Part 5 for Public Water Systems. To answer the question regarding whether it is safe to use existing wells for irrigation or other purposes, the well water would need to be sampled and analyzed and the sample results would have to be evaluated on a case by case basis. Please contact NYSDOH directly if you have questions related to a well on your property.

Question: Residents want meetings taped with formal minutes made available.

Response: NYSDEC and NYSDOH generally do not tape availability sessions or prepare formal minutes. If someone wants to tape a meeting they are free to do so, but anyone taping is requested to provide notice to the people present.

Question: Should information being gathered be processed by NYSDEC and NYSDOH, or should a local firm perform the testing?

Response: NYSDEC and NYSDOH are overseeing the entire project and will be reviewing the analytical data, which is being provided by Severn Trent Laboratory in Burlington Vermont, an independent third-party laboratory. Severn Trent Laboratory is certified by NYSDOH to perform the analyses.

Question: Local residents wanted written documentation of results.

Response: All of the analytical data and reports will be available to the public in writing. The general public will not be provided the addresses and names corresponding to individual home's analytical results, to protect the privacy of the individual residents. The results of sampling in individual homes and businesses will be discussed in a general nature. Local residents are free to share any results as they see fit.

Question: Not all residents in the affected area were sent letters. Will everyone be informed of the next meeting?

Response: The goal of our last mailing effort was to send information to all residents residing or owning property within the study area. We were notified that some residents within this area did not receive the last mailing. Several residents have since been added to the current mailing list. To the extent possible, all residents within the study area will be notified of the next meeting. Anyone who did not receive notice but believes they should have are requested to notify NYSDEC or NYSDOH to be added to the project contact list.

Question: Provide boundary redefinition of who is being tested.

Response: The boundary of the study area has been defined and presented to the public. This information is attached (see attached map). The map of the study area will also be available at the next availability session. If the boundaries of the study area change, a revised map depicting the study area will be produced and the public will be informed.

Question: Questions were asked why right-of-ways were being tested.

Response: The soil gas sampling points were located in public right of ways so that permission to access private property would not have to be obtained for each sampling location, which could have delayed implementation of the soil gas survey work. This approach was also less intrusive for local residents, and avoided having to work in deep snow in yards.

Question: Why aren't homes on Marion Street being tested?

Response: Marion Street is outside the study area boundary. The study area boundary was based on existing data on the extent of the groundwater VOC plume. However, the study area may expand if the soil gas data indicate that the soil gas plume extends beyond the study area as initially defined.

Question: Residents want to know what present test results show for TCE in water test wells. They want GE to provide results to date.

Response: The groundwater sampling data from the ongoing monitoring program is public information and can be provided to the public upon request to the NYSDEC. The agencies will be prepared to discuss the recent groundwater monitoring data at the next availability session.

Question: Residents asked what prompted the TCE testing.

Response: The decision to go forward with the soil gas investigation program for the GE Fort Edward plant site was initiated by NYSDEC and NYSDOH, and was based upon recent experience from other sites in New York State and across the nation. NYSDEC and NYSDOH believed that it was appropriate to investigate the possibility that VOCs could be entering structures in the vicinity of shallow groundwater containing VOCs near the GE facility.

Question: Who is responsible to provide the information to the residents and who will receive the report?

Response: NYSDEC and NYSDOH will ensure that documentation of results from samples taken from private properties will be provided to the residents/property owners. All reports will be available for review at the repositories listed in the attached announcement. (The general public will not be provided the addresses and names corresponding to individual home's analytical results, to protect the privacy of the individual residents.) In addition, any reports generated as a result of the work are public information and will be provided to anyone who requests them.

Question: Residents are concerned about providing information about what is in their basements presently, and are concerned it will be used to relieve GE of its responsibility.

Response: The decision as to whether a home will be offered mitigation is based upon whether the given home is within the soil gas plume. Offering a mitigation system is not dependent on whether a given home has had its indoor air sampled or what was detected in the home. The information gathered related to what household chemical products are present will only be used to help interpret and understand the indoor air sample results if detectable concentrations of VOCs are found that can not be explained by the other available data (sub slab air, soil gas survey, outdoor ambient air and groundwater samples.)

Question: Some residents said that GE representative told them that it didn't matter what the indoor air tested.

Response: The decision as to whether or not mitigation will be offered is not based upon the indoor air sample results; rather, the work plan states that the decision will be based upon whether or not the structure is over the soil gas plume. The determination of whether a structure is over the soil gas plume will be based upon the soil gas sampling being conducted around the perimeter of the study area which will define the extent of the soil gas plume. Any structures within the soil gas plume will be offered mitigation regardless of whether their homes or businesses were sampled or not.

The work plan for this investigation and mitigation program describes how the decision for mitigation will be made. On p. 31 of the work plan, the text reads:

“Appropriate ventilation of structures will occur as warranted for the structures located over the zone where detectable concentrations of COCs are identified within the study area.” (COCs in the work plan means constituents of concern; these are the site-related VOCs which are being looked for in this project.)

Question: One person questioned if TCEs could be transferred on shoes.

Response: It is very unlikely that TCE could be transferred on shoes. This would only be a potential migration pathway if the shoes had TCE product on them, or had soil on them containing high concentrations of TCE. NYSDEC and NYSDOH are not aware of any location related to this project where there is TCE product, or surface soils containing high concentrations of TCE.