

Former Witmer Road Drive-In

State Superfund Program

Site No. 932118

Town of Niagara, Niagara County



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

October 2026

Supplemental Investigation to Begin

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), in consultation with the New York State Department of Health, will soon begin a supplemental environmental assessment at the Former Witmer Road Drive-In site located at 4287 Witmer Road, Town of Niagara, Niagara County. Adjacent off-site areas will also be evaluated. DEC secured site access from property owners and developed a plan to conduct an investigation building upon existing chemical data from previous evaluations of the site.

DEC's sampling will allow for full delineation of the nature and extent of chemical contamination in soil, groundwater, surface water and sediment. All historic and new data collected will inform any next steps necessary, including potential cleanup actions, to protect the community and prevent potential exposure to contamination both onsite and offsite, as necessary.

In addition to the chemical contaminant investigation underway by DEC, DEC and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted radiological screening at the property in August 2026 as part of the Niagara and Erie County Radiological Assessment (NECRA). Based on the findings, the site was referred to EPA for additional assessment and part of the work expected this fall will help identify potential sources of radiological waste.

Highlights of the Supplemental Assessment Investigation

The supplemental assessment investigation will begin in fall 2026 and will comprise on-site and off-site work including:

- Installation of construction fencing around work areas and areas of exposed waste to restrict access and ensure public safety;
- Clearing of trees and brush along pathways up to 15 feet wide to allow access for sampling personnel and equipment, slated to begin in late October;
- Performing additional radiological surveys;
- Collecting surface soil samples;
- Installing and sampling of soil borings;
- Implementing a Community Air Monitoring Program (CAMP) to help prevent any contamination from affecting the community;
- Collecting groundwater samples from 5 existing groundwater monitoring wells;
- Installing and sampling of additional groundwater monitoring wells;
- Collecting surface water and sediment samples from Gill Creek;



1. Witmer Road Drive-In Site and off-site area for additional assessment.

- Collecting water elevation data from monitoring wells and Gill Creek to determine groundwater flow directions;
- Evaluating existing wastes at the site for characterization and disposal purposes.

Next Steps

DEC and DOH will use the information developed during this investigation to evaluate the potential for exposures and need for, and potential ways to, mitigate any exposures and clean up chemical contamination related to the site. DEC will keep the public informed throughout the investigation and during any cleanup of the site. The information collected during the supplemental assessment investigation will be summarized in a publicly available report.

Site Background

The site is a 1.72-acre parcel bounded by Witmer Road to the north, Gill Creek to the east, and an industrial park to the south and west. The site was used as farmland prior to 1953 and as a drive-in theater from approximately 1953 to 1986. In 1986, the property was sold and a single-story office/laboratory building and associated parking lot were constructed in 1987.

In the late 1980s, a suspicious material was noticed in one of four geotechnical borings that were installed for a proposed building expansion. Site characterization investigations performed from 1989 through 2007 identified waste materials on-site and extending south from the site across two additional off-site properties. Contaminants (including xylene, ethylbenzene, phenol, arsenic, lead, and chromium) were detected in waste materials at concentrations above State Soil Cleanup Objectives for commercial property but did not meet hazardous waste criteria. Some localized groundwater impacts (ethylbenzene, toluene, xylene, phenol, chromium) from the wastes were also identified.

Based on the earlier site characterization and the current use of the property, the primary source of human exposure would be direct on-site contact with the contaminated waste materials or contaminated groundwater. Site groundwater impacts at the time were found to be limited due to the low permeable soils, and evidence of groundwater contaminant migration was not identified. Surface water in Gill Creek did not appear to have been affected by the waste material or the localized groundwater contamination. Additionally, the area is served by public water that is not impacted by site contamination. With the data obtained at that time and the hazardous waste cleanup criteria applicable at that time, DEC classified Site Number 932118 as an “N site,” one defined as requiring no further action at that time.

An Action Plan for site redevelopment was developed in 2020 for the Niagara Orleans Regional Land Improvement Corporation. The report primarily summarized environmental testing results from past investigations but also included a new surficial radiation survey. The radiological survey measurements showed that a small area of the site had elevated radiological readings. This information, which was not conveyed to DEC until August 2026, in combination with recent [Niagara and Erie County Radiological Assessment](#) (NECRA) findings, has prompted a reevaluation of site contamination.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Witmer Road Drive-In Chemical Investigation Project-Related Questions

Steven Moeller, Project Manager
NYSDEC, Division of Environmental Remediation
700 Delaware Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14209
p: (716) 851-7220
steven.moeller@dec.ny.gov

Project-Related Health Questions

Sophie Racz, Project Manager
NYSDOH, Bureau of Environmental Exposure and Investigation
Corning Tower
Room 1787
Albany, NY 12237
p: (518) 402-7860
Beei@health.ny.gov

Witmer Road Drive-In Radiological Investigation Project-Related Questions

Niagara and Erie County Radiological Assessment Team
P: (844) 612-8144
NECRA@dec.ny.gov

WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

Access project documents through the DECinfo Locator and at this location:

<https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/932118/>

Sign up to receive site updates by email:

<https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/site-cleanup/regional-remediation-project-information/environmental-cleanup-email-newsletters>

Additional site details, including environmental and health assessment summaries, are available on NYSDEC's Environmental Site Remediation Database (by entering the site ID, 932118) at:

<https://appfactory.dec.ny.gov/DERExternalSearch/ERDSearch>