COMMUNITY UPDATE

NEW YORK STATE | Department of Environmental Conservation

SEPTEMBER 2023

DEC Expands Indoor Air Sampling in Gowanus Canal Area with New Comprehensive Soil Vapor Intrusion Investigation

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is working closely with the State Department of Health (DOH) to protect public health and the environment. In Brooklyn, DEC and DOH are working with partners from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to undertake the comprehensive investigation and cleanup of former industrial sites near the Gowanus Canal. New York State is committed to keeping the community informed about ongoing cleanup actions and efforts to address legacy contamination in the Gowanus neighborhood.

WHO TO CONTACT

Gowanus Canal Area SVI Sampling

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Aaron Fischer
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-7016
(518) 402-9805
Aaron.Fischer@dec.ny.gov

DEPT. OF HEALTH
Daniel Tucholski
NYSDOH
Empire State Plaza, Corning Tower
Room 1787
(518) 402-7860
beei@health.ny.gov

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https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/61092.html

Community Availability Session Announced

On Oct. 3, 2023, DEC and DOH are holding an in-person community availability session to discuss the planned community-wide investigation and cleanup activities at dozens of sites in New York State's Brownfield and State Superfund cleanup programs to help answer questions and address community concerns. **LOCATION:** P.S. 372, 215 First St., Brooklyn, 7 to 9 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 3.

For more on State availability sessions, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XomDsUkc_k

This Community Update summarizes upcoming activities to help inform Gowanus residents and other stakeholders about the State's ongoing investigation to assess where legacy contamination may be affecting indoor air quality in buildings in the Gowanus Canal Area. This update also includes details about DEC and DOH's ongoing investigation of private properties surrounding several sites being addressed through the Brownfield Cleanup Program (473 President Street Off- Site), which is being incorporated into an expanded soil vapor intrusion (SVI) investigation. SVI is a process by which chemicals underground can enter the indoor air of a building through the basement, crawlspace, or slab.

This expanded State sampling effort builds upon a DEC investigation started last year to more fully assess the potential for SVI from contamination at various brownfield cleanup sites in the Gowanus area. Please see the map on page 5 for the SVI study area.

DEC's investigation will be conducted in a phased approach, focusing on areas of known contamination (refer to the orange-hatched area in the map on page 5) to inform the next phase of the study. DEC expects to seek access to these properties as part of this SVI investigation this fall, with the goal of conducting soil vapor testing during the 2023-2024 heating season. DEC will direct additional sampling in the larger Gowanus Canal area depicted on the map (see pink outline in the map on page 5) during future heating seasons.

DEC will contact the first phase of property owners to offer sampling to assess if building indoor air or sub slab is impacted by nearby contamination. Timely responses to the sampling offers are critically important to helping plan and conduct testing during the winter heating season, which is the best time to sample, and sampling results are most helpful in assessing any potential public health risk. Property owners should expect to receive sampling access request letters in the mail in October 2023.

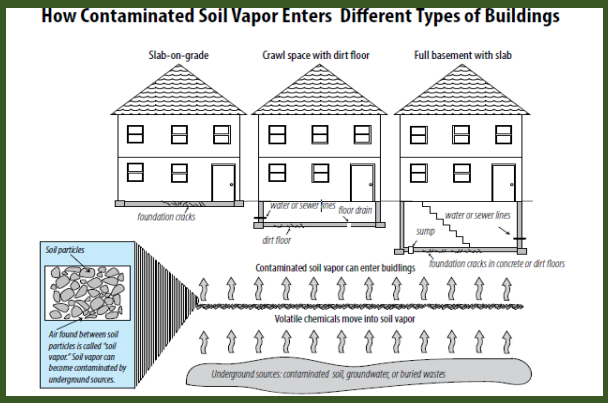
DEC staff setting up for collection of a sub-slab soil vapor sample

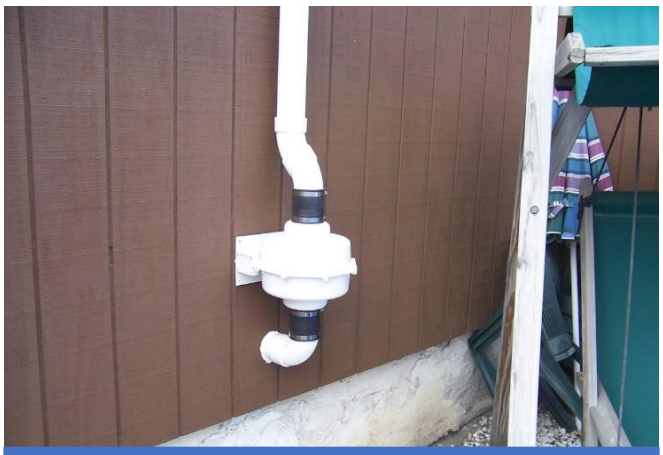
Systems Installed to Address Soil Vapor Intrusion: When soil vapor intrusion sampling results indicate mitigation is needed for buildings participating in New York State's investigations, a DEC contractor installs vapor intrusion mitigation systems or other acceptable measures**.**

These systems are tailored to individual building conditions. After installation, additional sampling is conducted to verify the system is effective at preventing contamination from affecting indoor air quality.

What is Soil Vapor Intrusion (SVI)?

Soil vapor intrusion is a process by which chemicals in the subsurface can enter the indoor air of a building through the basement, crawlspace, or slab, as depicted in the below graphic. New York State requires comprehensive evaluations of indoor air quality whenever these contaminants are detected at a Brownfield Cleanup Program (BCP) site.





Typical example of a residential soil vapor mitigation system

Example of a commercial SVI installation on a Brooklyn rooftop

473 President Street Offsite Investigation Ongoing

In addition to the new comprehensive SVI investigation getting underway this heating season, DEC is continuing to address groundwater contamination and soil vapor issues at properties adjacent to 473 President Street. After contamination was found at 473 President Street, DEC and DOH launched an off-site investigation of private properties and conducted SVI sampling at multiple locations (DEC Site Number C224220A). DEC and DOH selected the potentially impacted properties for soil vapor intrusion sampling based on groundwater and soil vapor data collected during the off-site investigation and examined groundwater flow and other data from the investigations completed at three nearby sites in the State's Brownfield Cleanup Program.

Investigation Background: The initial phase of an off-site investigation is called a Site Characterization. In August 2022, DEC and DOH oversaw the engineering contractor's preparation of a Site Characterization Work Plan to investigate off-site impacts from 473 President Street. The purpose of a site characterization is to identify the extent of off-site impacts related to the CVOC contamination, primarily trichloroethene (TCE), identified in soil and groundwater at the 473 President Street, President Street Portfolio, and 514 Union Street sites. Key components of the Work Plan include:

- Installation and sampling of 18 soil vapor points in the sidewalk on Union Street, Nevins Street, 3rd Avenue, and President Street;
- Installation and sampling of five groundwater monitoring wells to evaluate off-site impacts to groundwater; and
- Implementation of an off-site SVI investigation that includes collecting sub-slab soil vapor and indoor air samples at nearby structures.

Ongoing Sampling of Private Property: DEC, in consultation with DOH, requested access to 33 properties the investigation identified along and near Union, Nevins, and President streets. To date, 15 property owners granted access for sampling. Contractors under DEC oversight collected samples at each property during the winter months when conditions are best to assess the potential for vapor intrusion.

DEC Holds Violators Accountable for Cleanup Noncompliance

To date in 2023, New York State has issued $334,000 in civil penalties to multiple Gowanus Canal-area developers and property owners conducting cleanups for violations of State environmental protection laws and brownfield regulations. DEC continues to closely monitor all cleanup activities at sites in the Gowanus Canal area and provide stringent oversight to ensure compliance and protect public health and the environment.

In March 2023, DEC and DOH received preliminary results for the properties that were sampled. One building had levels of TCE in the indoor air that required immediate action by DOH and DEC to mitigate TCE in indoor air with a short-term mitigation system. That short-term mitigation system is currently operating at the property. To enhance the short-term remedy while the final remedy is being designed and implemented, DEC and DOH are working collaboratively with EPA. Results from properties sampled showed some other buildings require mitigation. DEC is working with a contractor to install vapor intrusion mitigation systems at the properties.

Next Steps: The site characterization has been completed and is available for review at the DECinfo Locator link (see page 4). The State will continue to monitor the mitigation systems that will be installed in the new and existing areas detailed in the attached map.

Contact DEC for Soil Vapor Intrusion Sampling

If you are a property owner in the 473 Off-Site investigation area who has not yet responded to New York State's offer for indoor air sampling and are interested, the owner can contact Richard P. Mustico by email at richard.mustico1@dec.ny.gov or by phone (518) 402-9647. Additionally, if you are a tenant in a building and would like sampling, contact your landlord/property owner to request that the property owner comply with sampling requests. DEC and DOH will work with the owners of other properties in the area and conduct additional investigations as appropriate.

Receive Site Fact Sheets by Email

Have site information such as this community update and fact sheet sent right to your email inbox. DEC invites you to sign up with one or more contaminated site email listservs at:
www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/61092.html

It's quick, it's free, and it will help keep you better informed. As a listserv member, you will periodically receive site-related information and announcements for all contaminated sites in the county(ies) you select.

For more information on New York State's environmental investigation and cleanup actions in the Gowanus Canal area, visit
https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/127317.html

WHO TO CONTACT

473 President Street Offsite Investigation

DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
Richard Mustico
NYSDEC, 625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233-7016
(518) 402-9647
Richard.mustico1@dec.ny.gov

DEPT. OF HEALTH
Angela Martin
NYSDOH
Empire State Plaza, Corning Tower Room 1787
(518) 473-4671
beei@health.ny.gov

WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

Access project documents through the DECinfo Locator:
https://www.dec.ny.gov/data/DecDocs/C224220A/

and at these locations(s):

Carroll Gardens Branch Library
396 Clinton Street Brooklyn, NY 11231
(718) 596-6972

Brooklyn Community Board 6
250 Baltic Street Brooklyn, NY 11231
(718) 643-3027

Gowanus Canal Area SVI Study
Initial Investigation Area