

Hercules, Inc. Aqualon Division

**1111 Hercules Road
Hopewell, VA 23860
Congressional District 4
EPA ID #: VAD003121928
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Current Progress at the Site

The Hercules Aqualon Plant, located in Hopewell, Virginia, is continuing corrective action activities in accordance with the EPA Region 3 Facility Lead Program. As part of the program, Hercules is conducting an evaluation to determine whether hazardous constituents have been released from the areas in which solid waste was managed. Based on the results of the investigation, the facility may need to conduct clean up activities to address environmental contamination.

By coordinating with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ), Hercules has investigated and cleaned up various units at the site. In October 1999, EPA and the VDEQ conducted a site visit to assess the current status. Subsequent to the visit, Hercules accepted EPA's invitation to enter into a Facility Lead agreement to direct site-wide corrective action.

Hercules prepared a work plan under the Facility Lead Program to begin investigating a subset of the units where there was potential for having had a release to the environment. EPA approved the work plan and Hercules implemented the field work activities in December 2001. EPA and Hercules discussed the results from the investigation in February 2002 and mutually agreed that further work was needed.

Hercules prepared a work plan for sampling four additional areas at the facility and completed field work in November 2002. The results of the field work were discussed with EPA in July 2003, when it was agreed that further evaluation was required. That additional work was subsequently completed. Hercules submitted a RCRA Facility Investigation Report in September 2005 to document the findings of the investigations that have been completed to date and recommend additional limited investigation to fill data gaps. Hercules conducted a third phase of investigation at the facility in spring 2007. A report documenting the findings of the investigation was submitted in November 2007 and is currently under review by EPA..

In September 2004, EPA issued Environmental Indicator Determinations for Current Human Exposures Under Control, and Migration of Contaminated Groundwater Under Control. These determinations document that under present conditions, the facility does not present a significant risk to workers on the site, or the community in the surrounding area.



View showing one of the lagoons at the Hercules site.

Site Description

The Hercules Aqualon site occupies a 390-acre parcel of land in Hopewell, VA and employs about 400 local residents. Hercules purchased the property in 1926 but the site has been used for industrial purposes since 1912 under various owners/operators. The Hercules Hopewell Plant is one of the largest cellulose derivative production facilities in the world. All of the finished products are based on cellulose, a raw material that comes from trees or cotton. The cellulose is swollen with sodium hydroxide (caustic) and reacted with one or more chemicals, depending on the product being manufactured. The resulting product is then purified, dried, and packaged.

Site Responsibility

RCRA Corrective Action activities at this facility are being conducted under the direction of EPA Region 3.

Contaminants

Several organic and inorganic contaminants have been detected in ground water at the site. The contaminants of most concern include diethyl ether, tert butyl alcohol, 1,4-dioxane, and 2-butoxyethanol. Further ground water investigations are planned to determine the sources and extent of contamination. Soil investigations have shown several organic and inorganic contaminants at several solid waste management units.

Community Interaction

Under the Facility Lead Program, Hercules Hopewell developed a comprehensive Community Relations Plan which describes how it will conduct public involvement activities to inform the local community, the State, and any other interested parties of the activities throughout the corrective action process. Hercules has an established community outreach program into which the Community Relations Plan has been integrated.

In May 2001, two biology classes performed field work and took a riding tour of the plant, including the investigation area. Current assessment and remediation efforts were discussed.

Hercules hosted a thirty-foot display in September 2001 at “Hooray for Hopewell”, a city weekend fair attended by thousands. About half of the display was devoted to wildlife diversity enhancements including remediation. Hercules prepared a fact sheet for distribution during the fair.

In July 2003, Hercules sent a revised Fact Sheet to the Hopewell Community and Industrial Panel, continued to offer plant tours for interested people, presented information to the public about past remediation and current assessment work, and encouraged news coverage by local media. Hercules most recent Fact Sheet was issued in December 2007.

Institutional Controls

No institutional controls are currently in place.

Government Contacts

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For more information about EPA’s corrective action program, including Environmental Indicators, please visit our site at: www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/correctiveaction.htm

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