

Rosen Brothers Scrap Yard

New York

EPA ID#: NYD982272734

EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 25

Cortland
City of Cortland

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 6/24/1988

Final Date: 3/30/1989

Site Description

The Rosen Brothers Scrap Yard site covers approximately 20 acres adjacent to a residential/commercial area in the City of Cortland. An abandoned industrial facility formerly owned by Wickwire Brothers, Inc., the facility manufactured wire screens, nails, and assorted wire products and allegedly disposed of industrial waste on the site. For decades, a portion of the eastern half of the Wickwire property was used as a scrap yard, supplying scrap metal to be used by the Wickwire steel mill. The facility was abandoned around 1970. Demolition of the western half of the property was completed by Rosen Brothers in 1972. In exchange for this work, Rosen Brothers was granted title to the eastern half. From 1972 to 1981, the site was operated as a scrap yard, automobile crushing, and scrap metal processing facility. Municipal waste, industrial waste, construction waste, timber, and drums were allegedly disposed of on site, including in a former cooling-water pond approximately 100 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 15 to 20 feet deep. Drums, their contents unknown, were routinely crushed on-site, the contents spilling onto the ground surface. The site was used to stage large quantities of abandoned vehicles, appliances, steel tanks, drums, fuel truck tanks, and other scrap materials. An open pit containing water with an oily surface and a large underground storage tank were abandoned on site. In 1972, 1984, and 1985, the Cortland County Health Department cited Rosen Brothers for violating state and county laws concerning waste handling. In 1985, the Cortland County Health Department ordered Rosen Brothers to take some needed safety and cleanup measures, but the order was disregarded. The site overlies the Cortland-Homer-Preble Aquifer, a glacial outwash sand and gravel deposit. Public and private wells tapping the aquifer within 3 miles of the site are the sole source of drinking water for an estimated 24,000 people. The population within a 1-mile radius of the site is approximately 15,000. Perplexity Creek, a seasonally intermittent stream, borders the site and discharges about 2 miles downstream to the Tioughnioga River, which is used for recreational activities. The southern border of the site abuts Cortland City High School, and the Rosen Brothers site was used as a travel route for students walking to school until it was secured with a fence in 1989.

Site Responsibility: This site is being addressed through federal and potentially responsible parties' actions.

Threat and Contaminants

In 1986, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation detected elevated levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and metals in on-site ground water. Subsequent sampling rounds have further documented this contamination. Surface soils were documented to be contaminated with elevated levels of semi-volatile organic compounds, metals, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Site-related sediments were found to contain semi-volatile organic compounds and metals. The installation of a cap over, and fence around, the site has eliminated the possibility of individuals from making contact with on-site wastes.

Cleanup Approach

The site cleanup is being addressed in two stages: immediate actions and a long-term remedial phase focusing on the cleanup of the entire site.

Response Action Status

Immediate Actions: In 1987, EPA secured and staged drums and excavated and staged visibly-contaminated soils. In 1989, the potentially responsible parties (PRPs), under EPA oversight, removed all surficial hazardous wastes, including the staged drums and stained soils, from the site and fenced the site to preclude potential exposure of unauthorized personnel to contaminated media. During a removal in 1989, drums, cylinders, PCB-containing transformers, and stained soil were removed. Structurally unsound buildings and a 150-foot high smoke stack were demolished in 1993. An oil pit

was demolished and an underground storage tank filled with #6 fuel oil was emptied in 1994. The PRPs removed and recycled almost 200 tons of structural steel in 1994. EPA arranged for the removal of over 500 tons of scrap metal in 1997. A removal action completed in 1998 provided for excavation and disposal of the underground storage tank, excavation of PCB-contaminated soils, and the installation of a cap over five acres of the property.

Entire Site: Under EPA oversight, in 1990, the PRPs began a remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) to determine the nature and extent of the contamination at and emanating from the site and to identify and evaluate remedial alternatives. The first phase of the investigation, completed in February 1992, included deep soil borings and test pits; surface water, subsurface soil, and sediment sampling; soil gas sampling; and two rounds of ground water sampling. The second phase, completed in December 1993, included PCB sampling of surface soils in the northeast portion of the site, surface soil and sediment sampling, and test pitting in the southwest portion of the site. The RI/FS was completed in the fall of 1997. A Record of Decision, selecting a remedy for the site, was signed on March 23, 1998. The remedy called for the capping of the former three-acre cooling pond which, as noted previously, was used for the disposal of municipal waste and demolition debris. Additionally, the remedy called for a surface cover to be placed on the remainder of the 20-acre property. The selected remedy also involved the excavation of four hot spots of contaminated soil, two that required the cleanup of 1,1,1-trichloroethane (TCA) contaminated soil and two that required the cleanup of PCB-contaminated soil. The PCB-contaminated soil excavation was completed as part of the aforementioned removal action. The design of the remedy was completed in spring 2002. In July 2002, the TCA-contaminated soil excavation and capping and cover components of the remedy commenced. The excavation work was completed in October 2002. All excavated soil was disposed of off-site. The capping of the cooling pond and the installation of the site-wide cover over remaining areas of the site was completed in July 2003. Ground water monitoring is ongoing. Because of nationwide concerns regarding vapor intrusion at residential and commercial properties located near sites with volatile organic compound-contaminated groundwater, the soil-vapor intrusion pathway is currently being evaluated.

Site Facts: In September 1988, EPA issued a Unilateral Order requiring Dallas Corp., Keystone Consolidated Industries, Inc., and Monarch Machine Tool Co. to secure the site and to transport hazardous wastes to an EPA-approved facility. In January 1990, EPA signed an Administrative Order on Consent with Dallas Corp., Monarch Machine Tool Company, and Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. to perform an RI/FS at the site. In February 1990, EPA issued a Unilateral Order requiring Cooper Industries, Inc., Keystone Consolidated Industries, Inc., Potter Paint Company, Inc., Harvey M. Rosen, and Smith Corona Corp. to participate in the investigation. In March 1998, EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to sixteen PRPs to conduct removal activities at the site to facilitate the redevelopment of a five-acre portion of the site. In September 1998, EPA entered into a Prospective Purchaser Agreement with the City of Cortland, administratively freeing the property for redevelopment. The removal efforts were completed in December 1998. In September 1998, EPA entered into a Consent Decree with fifteen PRPs to design and implement the remedy selected in the March 1998 Record of Decision. This Consent Decree was entered by the Court (approved by the Judge) on May 28, 1999.

Cleanup Progress

By fencing the site and removing approximately 1,700 drums, 20 cylinders, three PCB-containing transformers, approximately 800 tons of stained soil, excavating and disposing of an underground storage tank, excavating approximately 1,600 tons of PCB-contaminated soils and 900 tons of TCA-contaminated soils, and the installation of a cap over the former cooling pond and a cover over remaining areas of the property, the potential for exposure to contaminants at the site was greatly reduced.

Site Repositories

Cortland Free Library, 32 Church Street, Cortland, NY 13045

EPA Region 2 Superfund Records Center, 290 Broadway, 18th Floor, New York, NY 10007-1866