

# Malta Rocket Fuel Area

## New York

EPA ID#: NYD980535124

### EPA REGION 2

Congressional District(s): 22

Saratoga

Towns of Malta and Stillwater

#### NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 6/1/1986

Final Date: 7/1/1987

## Site Description

The Malta Rocket Fuel Area site consists of the 165-acre Malta Test Station and some undeveloped forest that forms part of the safety easement for the Test Station. The Test Station was established in 1945 by the U.S. Government for rocket engine and fuel testing, and was first leased by various agencies, including several departments of the military, and then purchased in 1955 by a predecessor of the Department of Defense. The site was also leased to NASA and used for research and development projects conducted on behalf of the Department of Energy. The General Electric Company (GE) operated the Test Station as a government contractor from 1945 to 1964. In 1964, the Test Station and the easement were acquired by a predecessor of the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA). GE continued as an operating contractor while NYSERDA and its predecessor conducted atomic and space research and development at the Test Station. In 1984, NYSERDA sold approximately 81 acres of the Test Station, including most of the original buildings, test areas, rocket gantries, and other facilities to the Wright-Malta Corporation. Operations at the site involved the use of hazardous substances. Investigations of soil, sludge, surface water, and ground water at the site indicated the presence of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Numerous potential source areas were identified at the site, including scrap metal storage, chemical storage, solid waste disposal, drum disposal, and fuel mixing areas; a burning pit; the rocket gantries and associated cooling pits; septic tanks and leach fields; aboveground and underground storage tanks and piping systems; and the magazine area. In 2004, the Luther Forest Technology Campus Economic Development Corporation purchased the Test Station property from the Wright-Malta Corporation, and the property currently houses the Luther Forest Technology Campus.

The population within a 2-mile radius of the site is approximately 12,000, which includes the Luther Forest housing development. Water is supplied to area residents through the public system, which draws ground water from wells located 6,000 feet from the site.

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

## Threat and Contaminants

The ground water and surface water at the site are contaminated with VOCs, primarily carbon tetrachloride and trichloroethylene. The Test Station water supply is treated by an air stripper to remove unacceptable levels of VOCs prior to on-site use; however, trespassers and on-site cleanup workers could be exposed to contaminated ground water or surface water. Residents of the Luther Forest housing development have expressed concern that contaminants may reach their water supply wells located 6,000 feet from the site. To date, ground water and surface water monitoring between the site and the public water supply wells have shown that site contaminants have not impacted the public water supply.

Site soils were contaminated with PCBs, lead, and mercury at concentrations that posed a threat to human health and the environment. These soils have been excavated and disposed of off-site.

## Cleanup Approach

The site is being addressed in a single long-term remedial phase to clean up the entire site.

#### Response Action Status

Entire Site: In 1985 and 1986, ground water at the site was sampled and found to contain volatile organic compounds

and metals. In 1987, an air stripper was installed on the Test Station water supply wells by Wright-Malta Corporation to treat ground water prior to its use by employees at the Test Station.

After adding the site to the National Priorities List, EPA performed preliminary investigations and determined that no immediate actions were required. A remedial investigation (RI) to determine the nature and extent of contamination at and emanating from the site was performed from October 1991 to May 1994. During the RI, two buried compressed gas cylinders were found, decommissioned and removed, hundreds of empty, buried, crushed drums were excavated and removed, and several septic tanks, catch basins, and dry wells were cleaned out. A feasibility study (FS) to identify and evaluate remedial alternatives followed. Based upon the results of the RI/FS, in July 1996, EPA issued a Record of Decision requiring continued air stripping of the Test Station water supply, natural attenuation and degradation of contaminants in ground water at the site, excavation and off-site disposal of contaminated soil at the Test Station, continued monitoring of the ground water and surface water, institutional controls (to prevent ingestion of contaminated ground water and to restrict the Test Station to its current commercial/industrial land use), and review of site conditions every five years to ensure that human health and the environment are protected. From July to December 1998, contaminated soil and debris were excavated and disposed of off-site.

Five-year reviews are undertaken at sites to ensure that implemented remedies protect public health and the environment and that they function as intended by site decision documents. In September 1999, EPA issued the first Five-Year Review report for the site, which concluded that the response actions being implemented at the site are in accordance with the remedy selected by EPA and that the remedy continues to be protective of human health and the environment. EPA issued a second Five-Year Review Report in September 2004 concluding the same. EPA will conduct another Five-Year Review by September 2009.

Site Facts: In 1989, EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order to eight potentially responsible parties (PRPs) for the performance of an RI/FS. In 1997, EPA executed a Consent Decree requiring the PRPs to implement the cleanup remedy. The Consent Decree was entered in U.S. District Court (approved by the Judge) on March 16, 1998.

## **Cleanup Progress**

The Test Station water supply has been treated by an air stripper since January 1987. Five hundred sixty empty, buried, and crushed drums were removed from three areas of the site, several septic tanks, dry wells and catch basins were cleaned out, two cylinders of toxic gas were decommissioned and removed from the site, and 106 tons of contaminated soil from the Test Station were excavated and disposed of off-site. Ground water and surface water have been monitored between the site and public water supply wells since June 1987; the monitoring will continue until cleanup standards are attained.

## **Site Repositories**

Malta Town Hall, 2540 Route 9, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

Round Lake Library, Round Lake, NY 12151

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