



Landfill Cap Construction Will Resume in Spring

West KL Avenue Landfill Superfund Site
Kalamazoo, Michigan

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Contact EPA

These EPA representatives can answer questions or provide more details about the West KL Avenue Landfill cap project:

Timothy Prendiville

EPA Remedial Project Manager
Superfund Division
(mail code SR-6J)
(312) 886-5122
prendiville.timothy@epa.gov

Dave Novak

EPA Community Involvement
Coordinator
Office of Public Affairs
(mail code P-19J)
(312) 886-7478
novak.dave@epa.gov

Toll-free: (800) 621-8431, weekdays
10 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Address:

EPA Region 5
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604

On the Web:

www.epa.gov/region5/sites/westklavenue/index.htm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 officials say construction of a new cap over the West KL Avenue Landfill that began last fall will resume around April 1. Cap work started last October with the creation of some erosion control structures, re-grading part of the landfill and installing portions of the vapor control system. Construction was suspended in January, but limited work on the vapor management system has continued through the winter. Erosion control measures have also been monitored to make sure they remain intact.

Truck traffic during cap work

The new multi-layered cap will include a liner composed of a synthetic clay-like substance, a thick piece of plastic, a drainage layer and two feet of soil planted with grass. Surface water on the landfill will be managed by construction of berms, channels, culverts and a stormwater basin. This portion of the work requires bringing earth in from an area across KL Avenue from the landfill where about 14 acres of a 58-acre parcel will be dug up and used for cover. All excavated areas will be restored and planted with vegetation. Topsoil for the landfill cap will be obtained from other local sources.

During cap construction, safety will be a top concern. Traffic safety measures will be established in cooperation with the Kalamazoo County Road Commission. A single truck crossing will be set up on KL Avenue between the landfill and the soil excavation area.

The cleanup contractor will provide full-time road flaggers as well as warning signs during truck operations. Under the work plan, the soil excavation area will operate from April to October, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturdays. Sunday work will only be done with prior approval of Oshtemo Township officials.

Dust and odor controls

Air quality controls will be enforced during the landfill grading work. The cleanup contractor will be responsible for continuous air quality monitoring around the landfill to ensure excessive dust, odors and vapors are not released from the site. The monitoring will be conducted according to a safety plan prepared in advance of the work by the contractor and reviewed by EPA.


Cap construction will leave undisturbed the majority of existing trees and vegetation along KL Avenue that serve as a visual barrier to the landfill. After the work is done, the landfill will be planted with vegetation, mostly grass. The landfill cap, along with a fence around the site, will then be inspected and maintained on a routine basis.

KL Landfill history

The landfill site covers 87 acres and operated as a private dump from about 1950 until 1960 when Oshtemo Township leased the property for use as a sanitary landfill. In 1968 Kalamazoo County bought the area. The county disposed of commercial and industrial waste there until 1979 when it was closed because nearby water wells were being contaminated. In 1980 the township capped the landfill with soil and clay, but that cap is now obsolete. EPA placed the site on the National Priorities List in 1982. The sites on this list are among the nation's most hazardous waste areas and are eligible for cleanup under the EPA Superfund program. A group of parties held legally responsible for the pollution is paying for the new cap and cleanup project.

EPA proposed a new cap be built over 61 acres of the landfill to help clean up the underground water supplies flowing below the waste site. These water supplies, called ground water, are being polluted by rain and snow melt seeping through the landfill and picking up contaminants buried there. The new landfill cap will stop more contamination from entering the underground water and enlarging a mass of polluted ground water called a "plume." The plume flowed west from the landfill and at one time threatened the drinking water wells of dozens of homes. A project to connect threatened homes to Kalamazoo city water supplies was completed last year, so the pollution poses no health threat to residents.

The new landfill cap is one part of the cleanup process. After the pollution source is stopped by the cap, natural processes such as decay and dilution in the underground water will eventually make the remaining hazardous chemicals harmless.

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Chicago, IL 60604-3590

77 W. Jackson Blvd.

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