

Community Update

Fairmont Coke Works Site

JUNE 2007

This community update was prepared by the Fairmont Coke Works Team.

What's Up at the Fairmont Coke Works?

Cleanup at the site continues. The site team, consisting of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), ExxonMobil, and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP), continues to excavate and to recycle wastes containing significant amounts of coke-making residues, known as coke breeze, and surficial coal from the north and south landfills. The team also continues capturing and treating runoff from the excavation site. This work satisfies requirements of an EPA Action Memorandum, issued by the EPA in June 2000. In addition, the site team is working with the City of Fairmont and redevelopment representatives to allow an efficient transfer of portions of the site that have been verified as cleaned up.



Fairmont Coke Works Site Overview

Progress Made at the Landfills

The recycling process of mixing coal and coke waste materials continues at an accelerated pace. ExxonMobil is employing Camp Dresser and McKee (CDM) as the principle contractor for the overall project, and Kipin Industries continues their role as the contractor responsible for the recycling of coal and coke waste materials. Since recycling operations were initiated in February 2003; approximately 250,000 tons of processed landfill wastes have been shipped off-site for power generation. The waste processing begins with the excavated materials being hauled to a lined containment pad that has been constructed on site. The waste is mixed with additives that raise their heat-production value (commonly called BTUs or British Thermal Units) to the appropriate level for the desired end-product: synthetic fuel (synfuel). Next, the materials are mechanically screened to remove debris, such as rock, metal fragments, and pieces of brick which comprise a small percentage of the excavated materials. The screening process also achieves the required particle size for the synfuel. The separated debris is decontaminated, if necessary, and stockpiled for later disposal. The synfuel also is stockpiled, and samples are taken to ensure that it meets established specifications. When the specifications are met, the recycled synfuel is shipped to the Grant Town Power Plant where it is used to generate electricity. To date, the recycled synfuel materials have been used to generate approximately 269,000 megawatt-hours of electricity, which is enough to power approximately 25,000 homes for one year. Throughout the excavation and processing, air monitoring is conducted to ensure that no contaminants are released into the community.

More Waste Causes Schedule Extension

The average landfill wastes processed monthly has increased dramatically up to 7,000 to 10,000 tons over the past year. However, the original estimate of 135,000 cubic yards of material to be excavated has been revised. It now is estimated that more than 300,000 cubic yards of landfill material must be removed. The increased volume and related issues, such as anticipated weather delays and time needed to secure additives, have extended the timeframe for completing this portion of the cleanup by approximately 20 to 29 months. The recycling project now is expected to be completed in mid 2008.

Runoff Is Captured and Treated

Runoff from the excavation of the landfills and the waste material processing is managed in an onsite capture-and-treatment system. The water treatment system assists in ensuring that no contaminants are permitted to migrate from the site. The system was constructed in January and February 2003 and began treating waste water in March 2003. The waste water and surface water runoff are captured in a system of drainage ditches and underground pipes that route them to the treatment system.

The first step in treating the impacted water is to adjust its acidity (ph). This is done by adding soda ash to the water. Hydrogen peroxide also is added to assist in removing suspended solids (metals). The water is then routed to a settling tank where the heavy metals in the water sink to the tank bottom. The final step in treating the collected water is to pump it through a series of bag filters to remove the remaining suspended solids and through activated carbon filters to remove any potential organic contaminants. The treated water is discharged to Sharon Steel Run in compliance with state-approved discharge limits.

Periodically, the solids accumulated in the settling tank are removed into transport containers and dewatered. The remaining material, called filter cake, is shipped off site for disposal. The tanks recently were cleaned in April 2007. The treated water is monitored daily for acidity, and lab analytical results are obtained monthly to ensure treated water is in compliance with discharge limits. The system has consistently performed as expected and is operating in compliance with regulatory requirements.

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Hotspots Will Be Removed

In July 2003, EPA issued an Action Memorandum for a Phase II Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA) for the former process area at the site. The EE/CA required removal of hot spots -- areas determined to be significantly contaminated. Subsequently, sampling results from the EE/CA indicated no significant contamination in the vicinity of the former coke ovens. However, the onsite by-products area indicated the need for a focused cleanup. The soils had become contaminated due to various leaks and spills during plant operations. EPA, WVDEP, and ExxonMobil conducted additional investigation and evaluation of the by-products area to allow a work plan to be developed. Laboratory analyses of samples from the area, along with visual observations from trenching, were used to develop a work plan for the excavation of the hot spots. Initial excavation and processing of waste materials in the by-products area began in late 2005 but was temporarily suspended while resources were redirected to increase production rates in the landfill recycling program necessary to meet redevelopment objectives. A limited amount of excavation remains to be conducted during the early summer of 2007 to complete the hot spot removal in this area.

Redevelopment Planning Continues

As part of the PPA, ownership of the property has recently been transferred to the Fairmont Coke Works Site Custodial Trust. In the Fall 2006, Governor Joe Manchin announced that a hotel, convention center and indoor water recreation park would constitute the first phase of the Fairmont community's master plan for redeveloping property once clean-up actions are completed. EPA, WVDEP, and ExxonMobil are currently focusing on freeing land in a portion of the Process Area known as the Coal Storage Area and the South Landfill Area to allow for the redevelopment activities to begin before the entire site cleanup is completed. Approximately 20 acres located in the southwest portion of the site, which were not used as part of the Fairmont Coke Works operations, have already been released for redevelopment. Additional work during early summer 2007 will be to release portions of the site for access roads and utility corridors in support of the redevelopment activities.

Additional Information About the Site is Available

Questions and concerns about the site cleanup can be directed to:

USEPA Region III
1650 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Carrie Deitzel (3HS43)
Community Involvement Coordinator
(215) 814-5525
(800) 553-2509 (toll-free)
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Eric Newman
Remedial Project Manager
USEPA Region III
(215) 814-3237
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Mary Green
FCLP Facilitator
Ann Green Communications, Inc.
(800) 250-3868 (toll-free)
mgreen@anngreencomm.com

Tom Bass
WVDEP Project Manager
(304) 926-0499 Ext. 1274
tbass@dep.state.wv.us

Information About the Site is Available Locally and on the web at:

Marion County Public Library
321 Monroe Street
Fairmont, WV

Community members are welcome to attend meetings of the Fairmont Community Liaison Panel (FCLP) which usually meets quarterly at the Circle W Club. For more information, contact facilitator Mary Green at 1-800-250-3868 (toll-free).

Web Address: <http://www.epa.gov/reg3hwmd/super/sites/wvd000800441/index.htm>

EPA Provides Resources for Independent Community Advisor

EPA's Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Program provides funds of up to \$50,000 to groups of qualified citizens' affected by a Superfund site so that they may hire independent technical advisors to help them interpret and comment on site-related information. Because only one TAG may be awarded per site, EPA encourages groups to consolidate to apply. For TAG information, contact Amelia Libertz, TAG Coordinator, at 215-814-5522 or 1-800-553-2509 (toll-free).

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