



EPA Completes Removal of Abandoned Drums at the Deferiet Paper Mill Site Deferiet Village, Jefferson County, New York

Community Update

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If you have any questions or would like additional information regarding the Site, please contact one of the following:

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If you would like information on general environmental concerns or the federal Superfund hazardous waste program, have concerns or complaints about the Superfund program, or if you seek assistance in resolving site-specific issues that were not fully addressed by the EPA, please contact:

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Site Background

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) received a request from Jefferson County, New York to conduct an environmental assessment at the former Deferiet Paper Mill Site located in the Village of Deferiet, New York in late 2015. The facility is located at 400 Anderson Avenue, Deferiet, New York and encompasses approximately 48 acres with a series of buildings that housed the former paper mill and a hydroelectric powerplant. The original mill manufactured paper of varying types, including newsprint and glossy magazine paper. The hydroelectric powerplant was built by the mill to generate steam which supplied electrical power for the machinery as well as the facilities. The paper mill has been abandoned since the mid-2000s, and with the exception of the power plant, is in a severe state of disrepair. In March 2016, the EPA performed an emergency response at the site in order to stabilize asbestos-containing material (ACM) along an easement that is used by the employees at the power plant on the property. In June 2017, the EPA conducted an assessment for additional ACM throughout the site buildings to determine eligibility for a removal action. During the assessment, abandoned drums and containers were discovered at two locations on the site.

Site Investigation

More than 100 containers including 4,500 gallon tanks, 55-gallon drums and industrial totes were found on the property. It was observed that several of these containers had holes, were bulging and leaked contents onto the ground. The EPA sampled a variety of the containers located on-site and discovered that many contained hazardous substances such as volatile organic compounds, heavy metals and other contaminants containing hazardous characteristics. During the assessment, the EPA field tested over 75 percent of the containers and found many to contain corrosive and unstable substances and were stored in unsafe conditions with potential exposure to trespassers.

Drum Removal

The EPA began by securing a portion of the building and moving hazardous waste into this secured area. After field screening and sampling of materials, the EPA began transferring materials from the totes and tanks into drums that could be disposed of off-site. Degraded drums were placed into larger overpack containers for safe shipment. Emptied totes and drums were cut up and placed in a container for disposal. An estimated 150 drums of waste were generated during the cleanup. Upon completion of this, the waste was shipped off-site to an appropriate and permitted disposal facility.

OVERALL CONTAINER REMOVAL PROCESS

<i>Operation</i>	<i>Process Details</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> Container Screening	<p>Several techniques are typically used to screen containers of unknown substances. Clues can sometimes be found on existing labels located on the outside of the drum or container, or the physical condition of the container may provide information on its contents. However, many times container contents do not reflect the labels. Additionally, many containers may not have labels, or the labels are illegible or void of information altogether. Many containers were also found to be in deteriorated condition due to prolonged exposure to the elements. To screen the materials, crew members wearing personal protective equipment will open each container with non-sparking tools and use a multi-gas air monitoring device to detect volatile vapors, measure oxygen levels, determine explosive atmospheres within containers and determine whether radiological materials are present.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> Material Identification	<p>A small amount of material will be collected from each container, and each sample will be screened by a chemist through a series of field tests to determine its characteristics. The field tests, known as the Hazardous Categorization or HazCat process, allow the chemist to determine the material's physical characteristics, pH, ignitability, combustibility, flammability and whether it contains chlorinated compounds, oxidizing materials, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other compounds. Other field equipment may aid in the initial determination of hazardous properties.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> Bulking of Compatible Materials	<p>All information collected from the container screening and material identification processes is used for grouping materials into compatible waste groups, known as waste streams, which share similar characteristics and can be combined or "bulked" safely. Bulking reduces the cost and time frame of removing all the containers from the site. Containers within the same waste stream may be broken into subgroups to ensure appropriate bulking without adverse chemical reactions. Samples from each container within each waste stream or subgroup are added together to generate composite samples; the composite sample represents the waste stream. Chemists survey the composite sample for any changes in characteristics or reactions. Once cleared, the composite sample is sent to a laboratory for full analysis. The analytical results confirm which containers can be bulked together for disposal purposes, based on the similar chemical make-up and physical characteristics of each waste stream.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> Transportation and Disposal	<p>Once composite samples have been analyzed and waste stream components identified for disposal, information is sent to various companies to bid on the transportation and disposal of the waste streams. Companies generate quotes for the EPA to review. The Off-Site Rule (OSR) under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act ensures that the transportation, treatment and disposal facilities selected for this project are in full compliance of state and federal laws. Following review and satisfaction of the OSR, a subcontract is awarded to the company and a schedule is agreed upon for the removal of site waste streams.</p>