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Soil sampling beginning at Starmet

By **Chris Cassidy**/ Staff Writer
Thursday, September 30, 2004

Crews will begin sampling materials next week at the Starmet Superfund site in West Concord, a process expected to take about two months.

Representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Department of Public Health held a public meeting at the Town House Tuesday night to update residents on the latest work to be carried out at the 46-acre former home of Nuclear Metals, Inc., which was designated as a federal Superfund site in 2001.

Project Manager Bruce Thompson, from the national consulting firm de maximis told residents between 20 and 30 workers would begin sampling on Oct. 4 and would use a variety of drilling and probing vehicles to extract parts of the soil and groundwater. The samples will be sent back for laboratory analysis and review through March of 2005.

Crews will return to the site around spring and summer of 2005 for the second round of groundwater sampling and to conduct more soil sampling, if needed.

By the fall or winter of 2005, Thompson said he hopes to have results on any potential health risks associated with the site's contaminants. The risk assessment report is expected to be the next major milestone in the project after the sampling wraps up because it's expected to lay out any dangers and hazards on the site that can pose risks to human health.

From there, the EPA will propose a plan and set forth the cleanup requirements for the site.

The involved agencies plan to hold public meetings at major project milestones and post information on the project's Web site, www.NMISite.org.

The U.S. Army has agreed to pay for the removal and disposal of more than 3,700 drums and containers of depleted uranium from the Nuclear Metals/Starmet site as part of a settlement reached with the Massachusetts attorney general's office in May.

Tuesday night, some residents urged environmental officials to sample areas outside the boundaries of the Starmet site, to test for contaminants that may have drifted to neighboring properties, including the nearby Thoreau Hills neighborhood.

Thompson said the best strategy would be to start in the area crews know is contaminated before moving outward. He also cited tight budgetary constraints and the expense of randomly sampling locations two or three miles away from the contamination site.

When crews pull the samples, they will wear protective scuba tanks on the first day and vacuums to trap any contaminated air particles that may come up from the ground. Those samples will then be sent to a lab for overnight testing to ensure the air workers are breathing is safe.

There will also be fences on the sides of working areas to sample the air and ensure its purity.

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