

REPORT IS FIRST STEP IN CLEANUP AT STARMET SITE

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The complete process may be more than 10 years away, but the first major step in the total cleanup of **Starmet** Corp.'s 46-acre site in West Concord will be a lengthy report covering environmental testing and how a risk-assessment program will be conducted.

This report is due to be unveiled in December and then will be discussed the following month by members of two local groups, the Citizens' Research and Environmental Watch and the 2229 Main Street Committee. **Starmet** is located on Main Street, off Route 62. But a remedial action plan for the **Starmet** property will not be determined until 2008, and it will take another five years, at least, to carry out that plan, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

The **Starmet** site went on the agency's Superfund list in June 2001. The company's predecessor firm, Nuclear Metals Inc., made uranium-tipped bullets for the Army in the 1970s, 1980s, and late 1990s. The site is contaminated with a variety of hazardous substances, including beryllium, lead, and radioactive materials.

In the meantime, there are no imminent dangers from hazardous materials on the company's property, even though there is groundwater contamination, said Melissa Taylor, an EPA remedial project manager with responsibilities for the **Starmet** cleanup. She noted that Concord's public water supply does not draw from wells that could be tainted by the groundwater.

Taylor, officials from the state Departments of Environmental Protection and Public Health, and the project coordinator for a consulting firm spoke at a public information meeting last Tuesday night on **Starmet** matters. The meeting was held at the Concord Town House.

A Connecticut-based company, de maximis Inc., is spearheading the remedial investigative and design work. Subcontractors are GeoSyntec Consultants of Boxborough, Mactec of Wakefield, and Gradient Corp. of Cambridge.

In mid-June, the EPA, which spent \$1.2 million earlier this year on the temporary cleanup of the **Starmet** site, named five parties responsible for the property's contamination. They are the US Army; the US Department of Energy; Whittaker Corp. of Simi Valley, Calif.; Textron Inc. of Providence; and MONY Life Insurance Co. of New York City.

Under the terms of the EPA consent order, the Army and the Department of Energy will pony up 98 percent of the total bill for the final environmental studies. The three companies, which retained de maximis, will pay the remaining 2 percent.

The **Starmet** Superfund property is "one of the most complex" to deal with because of the amount of ground to cover in unearthing pollutants, Bruce Thompson, de maximis's project coordinator, told Concord residents who packed the town government's main hearing room Tuesday.

The situation is complicated further, Thompson and others said, by the presence of a new **Starmet** entity that is making aluminum and powdered metal products on the West Concord site. **Starmet** filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the spring of 2002.

The state Department of Public Health makes weekly visits to the **Starmet** property "to make sure that radioactive materials are protected and are inventoried properly," said Steve Larson, an investigator for the department. And so far, safeguards are in place for what will be "an ongoing [testing] process," he said.

Four months ago, the state public health department amended the company's radioactive materials license. It can now only possess these materials, as opposed to also making and distributing them.

The state Department of Environmental Protection, meanwhile, is completing its negotiations with the US Justice Department, representing the Army, to have 3,800 barrels of depleted uranium and other processed wastes removed from the **Starmet** site.

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