

CONCORD

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Debris removed from polluted site

Metal samples, drum remnants to be analyzed

By Davis Bushnell, Globe Correspondent | December 23, 2004

CONCORD -- A cleanup crew spent the last few weeks removing metal debris and remnants of some 60 underground drums from a small area on the Starmet Corp. Superfund site in West Concord.

Samples of the material, taken from a 150-by-200-foot area near a holding basin and cooling-water pond, have been sent to General Engineering Laboratory in Charleston, S.C., for analysis, said Bruce Thompson, Starmet project coordinator for De Maximis Inc. of Weatogue, Conn. The firm is conducting an investigation on how to clean up the 46-acre property off Route 62 for the five parties cited by the US Environmental Protection Agency in June 2003 for contaminating the site. In June 2001, the property went on the EPA's Superfund list, which designates hazardous-waste sites that pose a health risk.

Starmet's predecessor company, Nuclear Metals Inc., made uranium-tipped bullets for the Army from 1970 to 1999.

The material removed could be uranium dust and beryllium, a lightweight metallic element, Thompson said, emphasizing that monitors installed around the property's perimeter are indicating that no contaminants have been released into the air.

Concord Deputy Fire Chief Chris Kelley and James West, a member of an activist group, praised the efforts of Thompson's firm.

"I'm impressed by De Maximis's professionalism," Kelley said, adding that his department has reviewed and made minor revisions to a comprehensive safety plan.

West, a technical assistance coordinator for the Citizens Research and Environmental Watch group of Concord, said, "Members of our group are really pleased that the buried material has been removed" without incident.

Meanwhile, the state Department of Environmental Protection has set a Jan. 22 deadline for receiving proposals to remove more than 3,700 barrels of depleted uranium that are now being stored in Starmet buildings. The Army has agreed to pay for the removal of these barrels, which contain low levels of radioactive material. ■