

CONCORD, TEWKSBURY

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## Superfund cleanup set for two sites

### Superfund cleanup set for 2 properties

By Davis Bushnell, Globe Correspondent | September 23, 2004

Field work is scheduled to begin next month at two of the region's most contaminated sites, Starmet Corp. in West Concord and the former Rocco's Landfill in Tewksbury. Both properties were placed on the US Environmental Protection Agency's Superfund list in June 2001.

The EPA recently approved work plans featuring extensive water and soil samplings at the two sites. Once a determination of the extent of contamination has been made sometime next year, a process to look into possible health risks can begin, officials said.

The federal agency and the state Department of Environmental Protection will hold a public information meeting Tuesday on the Starmet field work, which is expected to begin Oct. 4. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. in the main hearing room of the Concord Town House, 22 Monument Square.

A similar meeting is expected to be held in Tewksbury in October or November on the work plan for the old Rocco's Landfill, now known as the Sutton Brook Disposal Area, said Donald McElroy, the EPA's remedial manager for the property.

In another development concerning the Starmet site, the environmental protection department is preparing to solicit bids for the removal of more than 3,700 barrels of depleted uranium stored in various buildings on the 46-acre property. Requests for proposals could "possibly" go out next month, department spokesman Joseph Ferson said. If that happens, the project would probably get started early next year, he said.

The US Army has agreed to pay for the removal of the barrels, which contain low levels of radioactive material. Starmet's predecessor, Nuclear Metals Inc., produced uranium-tipped bullets for the Army in the 1970s, 1980s, and late 1990s.

Members of activist groups, meanwhile, who are monitoring the two Superfund sites, say they're generally pleased with the field work plans.

"The work that is about to begin is an important benchmark in the long process to clean up the [Starmet] site," said James West of Concord, technical assistance coordinator for the Citizens Research and Environmental Watch group. "We hope that as many residents as possible will attend the Sept. 28 meeting to find out more about the project."

Susan Sinclair of Wilmington, president of the Townspeople Organized Against Illness and Contamination group, said she and other members are "happy" that plans for the 100-acre Sutton Brook area have jelled "so that field work can start soon."

Overseeing the investigative work at Starmet is de maximis Inc. of Weatogue, Conn. The firm is handling the field work for the five parties cited by the EPA in June 2003 for being responsible for the property's contamination. Besides the Army, they are the US Department of Energy, Whittaker Corp. of Simi Valley, Calif.; Textron Inc. of Providence, and MONY Life Insurance Co. of New York City.

The project coordinator for de maximis, Bruce Thompson, said his firm, along with subcontractors, will be working nonstop during October and November, collecting water and soil samples "across the site. Three drilling rigs will be operating at one time."

Based on the results of operations this fall, a second sampling phase will get underway next spring, he said, adding that a risk-assessment program could begin next summer. A remedial plan for the property is targeted for 2008 or 2009.

The Tewksbury project could also have two investigative phases, the first one this fall and next winter, the second in the spring, when contamination findings are likely to be revealed in detail, said McElroy of the EPA.

Woodard & Curran, an Andover environmental consulting firm, will conduct these investigations. The firm is working on behalf of 25 parties "potentially responsible" for the contamination of the former landfill, which was closed in 1982. The parties include the town of Tewksbury, Raytheon Co., and the Gillette Co.

The sampling work and risk-assessment phases may not be completed until 2006 or later, McElroy said, emphasizing that it is always difficult to come up with precise timetables for Superfund site cleanups because of variables such as additional sampling work and funds needed for remedial action. ■

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