

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Superior Barrel and Drum - Removal UPDATE – EXPANDED BACKGROUND



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region II

Subject: EXPANDED BACKGROUND
Superior Barrel and Drum

Elk, NJ
Latitude: 39.6930670 Longitude: -75.1345550

On August 29, 2013, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) notified the EPA Region 2 Regional Emergency Operations Center of deteriorated conditions at the Superior Barrel and Drum Site, a former drum and container reconditioning facility and wholesale industrial supplier. This facility is not served by any public utilities and appears to have been abandoned. NJDEP Emergency Response personnel requested the assistance of the EPA On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) with investigating conditions of containers at the facility.

On August 30, 2013, EPA OSCs met with NJDEP and Gloucester County officials at the site. Thousands of containers, mostly 275-gallon totes and 55-gallon drums, were observed along a public road (Jacob Harris Lane) which borders the site as well as in the woods, wetlands, and elsewhere throughout the property. Drums and other containers were stacked several high in numerous locations and were in various states of deterioration. Many containers were found to be leaking, without tops, exposed to weather elements, rusted, damaged due to gunshots, stored improperly, and laying on their sides. Some containers were found in standing water. Numerous trailers, most of which are heavily damaged, were also found to be open and containing numerous 55-gallon drums. Thermal imaging indicated that most of the containers throughout the site were full of contents, but the majority were not labeled. Labels on several of the containers indicated that their contents were flammable liquids, corrosives, marine pollutants, flammable solids, oxidizers or non-hazardous materials. County officials indicated that attempts to reach the property owner had failed numerous times. The owner had filed for bankruptcy in 2012 but the case was dismissed due to lack of information provided by the plaintiff. Elk Township was planning foreclosure proceedings in summer

2012 due to back property taxes owed; however the Gloucester County Fire Marshal's Office recommended not doing so due to site conditions.

NJDEP collected samples from four random 55-gallon drums and analyzed them using field screening tests, including photo-ionization detection and hazardous material categorization (HazCat) analysis. Results indicated that the materials were corrosive and highly flammable, and had high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

NJDEP referred the site to the EPA on August 30, 2013 due to the conditions at the site, including container contents spilled in wetlands, contents pooling alongside the road, and unsecured access to the facility. On August 30, 2013, the EPA contacted the property owner, who also owns the on-site business, to request access to perform an assessment and investigation of container contents. The property owner stated that all containers located inside the on-site building contained non-hazardous materials, while the contents of the containers located outside the building were unknown.

Following numerous attempts to obtain access to the site from the property owner and issuance of an Administrative Order to the property owner for site access, on September 12, 2013, the EPA obtained an Administrative Warrant for entry onto the Superior Barrel and Drum Site from a United States Magistrate Judge. The warrant allows for entering, investigating and securing the property as well as sampling of containers located on-site.

On September 13, 2013, the EPA Removal Action Branch (RAB) initiated a removal assessment of the site. As part of these operations, samples were collected from a random selection of containers throughout the site for HazCat field analysis with assistance from the EPA Removal Support Team (RST) and Emergency and Rapid Response Services (ERRS) contractors. Between September 13 and 27, 2013, a total of 252 containers were opened and aliquots of the contents were collected for HazCat analysis. The analysis indicated the presence of oxidizers, flammable liquids, flammable solids and combustible liquids within containers on-site. Many of the containers contained multiple phases of material (i.e., liquids, sludges and solids), and handheld monitoring equipment indicated that vapor phase within the head space of many of the containers had high concentrations of VOCs.

A total of 84 samples (including six Quality Assurance/Quality Control samples) from 79 containers were sent off-site for confirmatory laboratory analysis. Environmental samples, including 36 surface soil and four surface water samples, were also collected and sent for confirmatory laboratory analysis. The analysis identified the presence of numerous CERCLA-designated hazardous substances within the on-site containers, surface soil and surface water, including benzene, toluene, trichloroethylene, ethylbenzene, xylenes, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and lead. Many of these compounds were found in containers that are actively leaking onto surface soils. Similarities between the hazardous substances found within the containers and the soil verifies that the on-site soil contamination is attributable to releases from the containers.

In addition to the HazCat and laboratory analyses, a container count was conducted. Approximately 2,000 containers were identified, not including hundreds of drums within deteriorated trailers which were physically unsafe to access. A large proportion of the containers were weathered and in poor condition. Drums were found to be bulging, punctured, rusted, and void of tops. Several drums and containers were found in standing water throughout the property, and many were located within the on-site wetlands. These wetlands are included in the National Wetlands Inventory, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Based on the results of the removal assessment and failed attempts to reach the property owner, on September 27, 2013, the EPA obtained an Administrative Warrant for a removal action at the property from a United States Magistrate Judge. In addition to entering the property, securing the site and sampling various media, the warrant allows for removal of containers of hazardous substances, decontamination of tanks, clean-up of chemical storage and process areas, off-site disposal of all materials removed from the site and further assessment to determine if additional response actions are necessary.

Following receipt of the Administrative Warrant for a removal action, the EPA initiated a removal action at the site on September 27, 2013. The removal action is currently ongoing.