PCB Cleanup at the Future Facebook Campus, Menlo Park, California

Site Description: The former Tyco Electronics facility in Menlo Park — later renamed TE Connectivity — is a 21-acre RCRA Corrective Action site with massive PCB contamination.

Figure 1: Facebook West Campus

Background: In 2012, Facebook entered into agreements with EPA and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to remove or modify the restrictive covenants to allow for the redevelopment of the contaminated property. The cleanup was a high priority for all involved because Facebook planned to construct a new campus (to accommodate 2,800 new staff positions) on a tight planning, design, and construction schedule. The new Facebook west campus includes an approximately 433,555-square-foot building, open spaces, and landscaped areas. The building features a nine-acre green roof with a half-mile walking loop for employees and more than 400 trees.

Cleanup: The original RCRA Corrective Action and PCB cleanup was conducted between 2000 and 2007. While the cleanup included the excavation of 5,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil, it relied heavily on landfill covers, long-term monitoring, and institutional controls to ensure its protectiveness. The final remedy involved the removal of over 25,000 tons of PCB-contaminated soils.

EPA coordinated closely with Facebook, Tyco, their contractors, the city of Menlo Park, San Mateo County, DTSC, and the public throughout the application process. EPA had reached agreement (verbally or by email) with Facebook on most technical issues before Facebook submitted the formal cleanup application. EPA also worked with Facebook's consultant to ensure that the cleanup application was complete and adequate for EPA approval. On review, EPA identified a few outstanding issues and concerns; instead of formally drafting comments requesting a revised application, it prepared an approval with conditions. This approach saved considerable time for Facebook and EPA. EPA Region 9's effort to get involved early and establish the goals and objectives for the cleanup resulted in an efficient, "green" cleanup.

EPA Region 9 also worked closely with the DTSC staff, county/city agencies, and Facebook to streamline the cleanup approval process, conduct meaningful public involvement, and perform a health-protective green cleanup. Early discussion with all of the parties involved in the effort benefitted the project and EPA in many ways. During formation of the cleanup plan, EPA Region 9 worked closely with Facebook to explore options for reducing the environmental footprint of the investigation and cleanup. The result was a shift from truck transport to rail transport for the removal of PCB-contaminated soils from the property. The chosen rail transport company was also a "green" company: its locomotives used advanced diesel filters, and it employed goats throughout its property to control weeds. It was calculated that the shift from trucks to trains reduced potential carbon dioxide emission by 641,000 pounds.