



N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources

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State and federal authorities to determine cleanup process for former CTS site in Asheville

RALEIGH – State and federal environmental officials are working together to determine how to most effectively clean up contamination at a former industrial site in Asheville.

The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources will allow the Environmental Protection Agency to make a decision about federal oversight of cleanup before acting on any proposed agreement for cleanup of contamination at the former CTS Corporation in Asheville. The EPA decision is expected in the next few months.

The EPA is conducting an investigation at the former CTS Corporation site and surrounding community to determine if the site qualifies for the National Priorities List, or NPL. Placing the site on the NPL would make federal funds available for site cleanup if responsible parties refuse the cleanup or don't have resources to complete the cleanup. If responsible parties refuse an EPA cleanup order, the EPA can clean up the site with federal funds and then sue the responsible parties for up to three times the cleanup costs.

The EPA is expected to decide this fall if groundwater or other contamination qualifies the site for the NPL. Under federal authority, the EPA decides if the site in Asheville qualifies for the NPL by using its numerical scoring system to determine the human health risks posed by exposure to site contamination through groundwater, surface water, soils or air pollution.

“If the EPA determines that the site qualifies for the National Priorities List, we will support that decision,” said DENR Secretary Dee Freeman. “If the site does not qualify for the National Priorities List, then the state is prepared to use its authority to seek cleanup of the site.”

Under state authority, the N.C. Division of Waste Management has proposed an administrative cleanup agreement with CTS that would call for the company to voluntarily clean up the site under the supervision of the state agency. By state law, cleanup actions performed for the division's Inactive Hazardous Sites branch must be done under a voluntary administrative agreement if the responsible party is willing to cooperate.

During the EPA's evaluation of the site, the state will continue to oversee CTS's comprehensive assessment of contamination at the site. That assessment, which is being supervised by the state Division of Waste Management, must be completed and approved by the state before cleanup can begin.

CTS ran an electroplating plant at the site from 1959 until 1984 and has been identified as the primary responsible party for contamination at the site. Samples of groundwater at the site have revealed contamination levels of the chlorinated solvent trichloroethylene, which is also known as trichloroethene, or TCE, that far exceed the federal safe drinking water standards. TCE is used primarily in industrial processes to remove grease from metal parts. Long-term exposure to TCE in the air or drinking water can be harmful to peoples' health.

For more information about the state's assessment of contamination at the CTS site, check out the state Division of Waste Management's Web site, <http://www.wastenotnc.org/CTSMillsGapRoad/>. Want more detailed information about EPA's National Priority List? Go to <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/>.

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