
Cleanup Activities to Begin at Radiation Property

Ottawa Radiation Areas
Ottawa, Illinois

March 2009

Meeting scheduled

EPA will hold a meeting to discuss the upcoming activities at the site. Anyone interested in the cleanup plans is welcome to attend. The meeting will be held:

Wednesday, March 25

7 p.m.
City Council Chambers
301 W. Madison St.

Contact information

If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact:

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Region 5 toll-free:
800-621-8431,
8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays

Region 5 address:
EPA Region 5
Superfund Division
77 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Information repository

If you would like to learn more about the Ottawa Radiation Areas site, please see the official documents in the information repository located in the Reddick Library, 1010 Canal St., Ottawa.

Visit EPA's Web page for more information: www.epa.gov/region5/sites/ottawa

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 will begin radium-contaminated soil cleanup activities on a city parking lot this spring. The city-owned lot is near the corner of Jefferson and Clinton streets and is known in EPA documents as the Luminous Processes Inc. (LPI) Adjacent Area. The contaminated soil beneath and around the parking lot will be removed to lessen potential threats to human health and the environment.

Residents and local businesses can expect to see increased traffic during the cleanup process. Some street parking and sidewalk areas will also be closed during the work.

Cleanup activities

The cleanup activities for the LPI area will include digging up and disposing of the contaminated soil at an off-site landfill approved for radioactive waste. Studies show the radium waste extends across most of the lot to a depth of 1 to 5 feet. It is estimated that 397 cubic yards of soil will be dug up and removed. The area would then be filled in with clean dirt.

During the cleanup, residents can expect to see the following activities:

- The parking lot soil will be dug up.
- The soil will be checked for radioactivity, and contaminated soil will be placed into specially-designed bags for removal.
- The bags of radioactive soil will be loaded on flatbed trucks and driven to a nearby rail yard where they will be shipped out of state for disposal at a licensed landfill.
- Survey teams will verify that all radioactive material has been removed.
- Clean soil will be used to fill in the hole to allow the property to be once again used as a parking lot.

EPA and its contractors will also be prepared to collect and treat pools of water that may be trapped underground. This water (called perched water in scientific terms) would be collected and treated before being released into Ottawa's sewer system.



Contractors load contaminated soil into specially designed bags for removal.

Selected cleanup plan

In early 2007 EPA held a comment period on the proposed cleanup plan and received one supportive comment. Cleanup procedures for the parking lot are nearly the same as the ones used on the other widely-scattered radium waste areas around Ottawa. Since that is the case, EPA “plugged in” the cleanup plan for the LPI area under the record of decision approved in 2003 for the other locations. By using this approach the cleanup process at the LPI area can be much quicker.

About the Ottawa Radiation Areas site

A total of 16 separate areas in and around Ottawa were found to be contaminated with radioactive waste. Some areas were also polluted by heavy metals. The radium-226 probably came from two Ottawa companies that used radium sulfate paint in making glow-in-the-dark watch dials and faces. Radium Dial Co. operated from 1920 to 1932 and Luminous Processes Inc. from 1932 through 1978. During the course of manufacturing, equipment, buildings and surrounding work areas became contaminated with radium-226. And making the problem even worse, plant waste was used as fill material at various locations around Ottawa.

Residential areas became EPA’s cleanup priority because the radioactive contamination posed an immediate health risk. Between 1995 and 1997 EPA removed more than 40,000 tons of radium-contaminated soil from 12 of the 16 areas. The LPI Adjacent Area has the potential for future residential or commercial development so local officials would like to see that location cleaned up.



United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

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