



Information Sheet

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About the Barrie Park Remediation Project

June 2003

This information sheet is one in a series created to inform the community about the environmental clean up underway at Barrie Park, the site of a former Manufactured Gas Plant.

Overview...

- Barrie Park was once the site of a former Manufactured Gas Plant or MGP.
- The utility companies that are successors to the company that once operated the MGP are cleaning up the soil in the Park. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), Park District and Village provide oversight .
- The project is not a mandated clean up, but a voluntary effort by the utilities under the Illinois EPA's Voluntary Site Remediation Program. This program provides the cleanup standards that must be achieved.
- Contaminated soil is being excavated from the Park, sent offsite by rail for disposal and replaced with clean soil.

In 1989 states began adopting laws for the evaluation and clean up of abandoned non-superfund sites, such as Barrie Park. Most MGP sites are referred to state programs for clean up because they generally do not meet the risk-thresholds for federal cleanup programs like "Superfund." The various utility companies that once operated the MGPs work with state agencies to identify sites that may require evaluation and cleanup. In Illinois, these former MGP sites are being cleaned up under the Illinois EPA's voluntary cleanup program, called the Site Remediation Program or SRP. This Illinois program was started in the 1990s.

Barrie Park was not deemed an imminent risk and was not eligible for Superfund clean up. In the late 1990's the utilities notified the Park District that studies showed the location of a former MGP below ground surface and requested access to conduct a site investigation. Barrie Park became enrolled in the voluntary Site Remediation Program.

Who is cleaning up Barrie Park?

Commonwealth Edison Co. and Nicor Gas Inc., are successors to the company operating the MGP between 1893-1931. These Utilities have taken responsibility for cleaning up Barrie Park. The Park District owns Barrie Park and has entered into an agreement with the utilities for the clean up. The Village owns the streets and parkways, and also has an agreement for the clean up of nearby public property and nearby private property if needed.

What's being cleaned up at Barrie Park?

Most byproducts from these plants are buried below the ground surface. Thus the clean up is intended to prevent potential future exposure, if contaminated soils are exposed or if repairs to utility lines by workers are necessary. Typical by-products of MGP plants include coal-tar residuals, benzene and a class of chemicals called polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's). Some of the former MGP structures such as like gas holders have been left at the site and will be removed.

Why is Barrie Park being cleaned-up?

From about 1893- 1931, the northern portion of Barrie Park was the site of a plant where coal was processed into gas for heating, cooking and lighting. Such plants were scattered across the northeast and mid-west, and were called manufactured gas plants or MGPs. There are more than 3,500 former plants nationwide, some 150 of which are in Illinois, such as in Kenilworth, Morton Grove, Skokie and Chicago.

Many of these former sites were buried and abandoned. In the 1980's the U.S. EPA adopted programs to address the most contaminated abandoned sites in the country. These were called Superfund sites. Unless a site was on the National Priorities List, under Superfund, or deemed by the Center For Disease Control (CDC) as posing an imminent risk, the regulatory initiative to clean up the site was left to the states.

How are former MGP sites typically cleaned-up? Does the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) provide oversight?



The clean up is being completed under the State of Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Voluntary Site Remediation Program (SRP). Barrie Park is not on the list of U.S. EPA Superfund sites, nor is it the subject of any current enforcement action. Under the SRP, the applicant is responsible for cleaning the property to meet state standards that are protective of human health and the environment. Clean-up criteria vary from site to site. Typically the depths range from three (3) feet to ten (10) feet for soil removal combined with capping, and excavation of all source material, or coal tar.

What is the scope of work at Barrie Park?

The Park District and Village have required clean up to at least 10 feet to meet the most stringent cleanup criteria under the Illinois EPA's SRP. In addition, the Park District has required the utilities to remove soil to a depth of 18 feet in the northern portion of the park because that is where the Park District anticipates it may (at some unknown future date) wish to construct a building with belowground improvements, such as an elevator.

Both the Village and Park District also are requiring the utilities to remove the former MGP wastes -- called "source material" -- to depths of at least 28 feet in the Park, and to any depth in the streets. The Park District and utilities also agreed to remove some of the former MGP structures and source material at depths of over 40 feet. These structures include buildings, below ground structures, and former piping associated with the MGP plant.

Where does the soil go when removed?



The cleanup consists of excavating soil and transporting it off the site for disposal. Most of the soil is transported off the site by rail via the line located immediately adjacent to the site. The most contaminated soil is being excavated under a tent-like structure, which helps control airborne emissions of contaminants and prevents soil from being blown from the site. Once this heavily contaminated soil has been excavated, the tent will be removed, and lesser-contaminated soil will be removed from other areas of the site. All soil removal activities are controlled under an air-monitoring program reviewed by the Illinois EPA.

When will Barrie Park be cleaned up and the Park re-opened? When will the fence come down?

The utilities anticipate that the park, streets and parkways will be cleaned up by December 2003. The Park itself is expected to re-open in the spring of 2004. The clean-up plan also calls for neighborhood improvements to be completed by this fall. Neighborhood improvements include water and sewer utility replacements, alley improvements, street re-surfacing and tree planting. The fence around the project is expected to come down at the same time the neighborhood improvements are underway. A smaller fence may remain inside the park while redevelopment activities occur.

Has the Illinois Department of Public Health studied the site and surrounding area?

The Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH) performed an epidemiological study in 1999. This study found that the differences in the incidence of cancer in Oak Park zip code 60304 as compared to similar populations were not statistically significant. The report noted that cancer is more common than most people realize, with one out of every two men, and one out of every three women developing it at some point in their lives.

To further study potential health effects in the Barrie Park area, the Illinois DPH performed "Public Health Consultation" studies in 1999 and 2000. These studies, performed in conjunction with the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, concluded that "no apparent public health hazard" exists after evaluating the results of surface soil samples collected from the park, parkways and residential properties.

Throughout the project the Illinois DPH undertakes additional studies. Currently in 2003, the Illinois DPH is reviewing the air data. Information is published as studies are completed and are available at the Park District, 218 W. Madison St., and at the Health Department in Village Hall, 123 Madison St.

Wasn't the cleanup stopped for a while?



In February 2002, emissions of benzene increased over a one-week period after a temporary enclosure was removed from the site and excavation encountered heavily contaminated source material in the north end of the park. Emissions did not exceed health standards applicable to the site, but threatened to shorten the overall schedule of the project, or the time available to complete the work and still meet the fence line air standard for benzene. The air monitoring stations performed as intended and functioned as an early

warning system that projects how much time remains to complete the project.

The fence line air standard -- or project ambient air quality standard (PAAQS) -- is based on the average concentration of benzene over the 18 months of project remediation. To ensure that the full scope of work could be completed, after a prolonged period of negotiation the parties agreed to conduct future work in this area under an enclosure with emission control equipment to reduce the potential for emission of benzene during work activities.

Will the cleanup be stopped again? How will I be kept informed?

A 30-day work stoppage in May and June of this year is scheduled for removal of the tent structure. After this planned stoppage, it is unlikely that more work stoppages will occur. However, the possibility that work may have to be stopped if unforeseen issues occur will always exist.



As noted above, the reason for the initial work stoppage was not based on a threat to the community, but a threat to completing the full scope of work. For this reason, work now is being

prioritized to ensure that utility replacement is completed and source material is removed. The Village has asked the utilities to be prepared to erect smaller mobile structures and use other forms of emission controls should the need arise.

At this time it is anticipated that the full scope of work will be completed in the park, parkways and streets. Residential clean up will be conducted on a different schedule and timeline, which should be affected by activities at the site. In the event of an unplanned project stoppage, Area 1 and 2 residents will be informed directly by use of hand-delivered fliers, mailings, phone calls and a public meeting. Individuals also call the Barrie Park Project Community Hotline 708.445.8876 with specific questions.

What will happen to the Park when the clean up is completed?

The Park District of Oak Park plans to redevelop Barrie Park and Barrie Center between Winter 2003 and Spring 2004, with a grand opening scheduled for August 2004. The Park District anticipates that the streets can remain open for most of that work. For more information, contact the Park District at 708.725.2020.

Why are residential areas outside of Barrie Park being cleaned up?

Historical documents indicate that the former MGP was located solely on the area that is now Barrie Park. However, to ensure that off-site impacts did not occur from the operation of the MGP, the Village included a provision in its Cleanup Agreement for the utilities to also evaluate and, if necessary, clean up nearby residential properties. Because the Village is not the legal owner of the residential properties, property owners must enter into their own clean-up agreement with the utilities.

How is Barrie Park different from the West Chicago Thorium Site?

The West Chicago Thorium Site is a Superfund site, which means that the site has been listed on the National Priorities List, or NPL, due to the presence of radioactive contaminants in soil. Sites on the NPL are those that the U.S. EPA has deemed a priority for cleanup and funding. The Barrie Park MGP Site is not a Superfund site. Overall, the West Chicago Thorium Site has a different risk profile than the Barrie Park former MGP site. Waste residuals were known to be present on residential property at the West Chicago site. Residential property clean up typically was less than a foot of soil. To date there is no evidence that MGP wastes are present on residential property in the Barrie Park area.

Detailed information about the Residential Site Remediation Program can be found in a future sheet...

Residential Remediation Information Sheet

Barrie Park – Timeline and History

Property Use:

- 1893 to 1931 – Manufactured Gas Plant
- 1931 to 1950 – Natural Gas Storage
- 1951 to 1959 – Nicor Office and Equipment Storage
- 1960 to 1965 – Village of Oak Park property
- 1965 to Present – Park District of Oak Park, Park Facility

Investigations:

- 1993** Evaluation of Air Quality by Cambridge Environmental
- Collected and analyzed 12 air monitoring samples on and around the Barrie Park Site and analyzed air samples for benzene, ethylbenzene, toluene, xylenes, and naphthalene
- 1998** Park District and Village of Oak Park notified by Utilities of presence of MGP on the site and the utilities intent to conduct investigation and remediation
- 1998-2001** Comprehensive Site Investigation (CSI) conducted in three phases; this included:
- Installation and sampling of groundwater in four monitoring wells and additional twelve temporary wells
 - Collection and analysis of over 120 surface soil samples on the site and 36 surface soil samples from Village-owned parkways
 - Collection and analysis of 68 surface soil samples from background parks and parkways in Oak Park
 - Collection and analysis of samples from over 200 soil borings installed in the Park, streets, and village-owned parkways
- 1999 - Present** Public Health Consultation conducted by the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and the Illinois Department of Public Health identified “no apparent public health hazard” after evaluating the results of surface soil samples collected from the park, parkways, and residential properties. In 2003 an additional study was conducted to review the air data with the similar conclusions. These reports are in the Barrie Park Repositories located at the Village Hall Health Department (123 Madison) or the Park District of Oak Park (218 Madison).
- 2000-Present** Residential Soil Sampling Program and Supplemental Site Investigation (SSI)
- Collection of samples from residential properties in four phases of sampling, including the collection and analysis of samples from over 200 soil borings in Areas 1 and 2
 - SSI included additional investigation after the hiatus to identify if stringers of contamination are adjacent to the roads

For More Information...

Village of Oak Park at 708.358.5770

Park District of Oak Park at 708.725.2020

The Barrie Park Project Community Hotline at 708.445.8876