



For Immediate Release: 3.18.2002

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Excavation Work at Barrie Park Temporarily Suspended

Excavation work at Barrie Park was suspended Friday as a preventive measure after one of nine air-monitoring stations located around the site perimeter detected heightened levels of benzene.

“The Village’s on-site consultants continuously evaluate the air quality at Barrie Park and track the efforts of the Park District and utility companies to ensure that established standards are met,” said Village Manager Carl Swenson.

“As soon as we learned of the elevated levels we notified the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency recommending a review of the data to ensure compliance with the long-term standards could be demonstrated.”

Two types of air monitoring are conducted at the Barrie Park remediation site. Time-integrated monitoring measures air quality on a long-term basis by combining samples gathered over several days to establish averages. Real-time monitoring measures immediate air quality and alerts officials to any harmful short-term risks. The elevated levels that led to the decision to suspend work came from the time-integrated samples.

“The air monitoring programs are designed to help protect residents and workers from unacceptable risks associated with compounds known to be in the soil,” said Tom Hahne of Tetra-Tech, Inc., the Village’s environmental consultant. “The standards are conservative and our actions reflect the conservative approach that the Village has applied to the project since it began”

Swenson added, “We feel it was a prudent decision to temporarily halt the remediation work in the interest of public safety. The Village has a good system in place to monitor the air during this project. This incident demonstrates that the system is effective.”

Hahne said halting work should provide the Utilities time to properly evaluate appropriate abatement measures at the before any excavation resumes. In addition to temporarily suspending work, abatement measures could include limiting the handling of waste materials and using additional engineering controls, coupled with more intensive air monitoring both in and downwind of the work area.

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(Note: IEPA news release concerning health risks to residents is attached.)

IEPA NEWS

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Barrie Park Remediation Temporarily Halted

Springfield, Ill.— After conferring with state and local authorities, Commonwealth Edison halted its remedial activities at the Barrie Park cleanup project in Oak Park due to air sampling results that exceeded established project emissions standards. The halt will allow a review of additional data and implementation of additional protective measures to minimize health risks to the public.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director Renee Cipriano stated that protecting the health of nearby residents would remain the Agency's most important consideration during this review. "We will allow work to continue only when we are confident that their health will be protected," said Cipriano.

The Agency's chief toxicologist, Dr. Tom Hornshaw, has conducted a preliminary review of the available data and has stated that benzene levels showed the risk for non-cancer illnesses were extremely low and that the risk for cancer-related illnesses was typical for air in an urban area. Dr. Hornshaw also noted that the adjacent rail lines and the Eisenhower Expressway could contribute to higher benzene readings.

Director Cipriano stressed that halting construction activities was consistent with the plan previously approved by the Illinois EPA. Commonwealth Edison entered the Illinois EPA's Site Remediation Program to clean up contamination at the site.

The Illinois EPA is currently reviewing a plan proposed by Commonwealth Edison to reduce levels of benzene emissions when remedial activities resume. The increase in emissions appeared to have occurred when a large protective dome, called a Sprung structure, was removed to facilitate the removal of impacted soils. Soil at Barrie Park had been contaminated with coal tar residuals from an old manufactured gas plant.

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