

Site: Former factory clear of toxins, is no longer a safety risk

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Toxic Substances and Disease Registry of the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The state Health Department is still investigating whether students or residents could have been exposed to any chemicals from the LaFrance site through the air, water or soil, Smith said.

The LaFrance cleanup began at the end of 1999 and involved mostly the removal of 2,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil.

Tests for the conservation department found five "hot spots," or areas contaminated with high concentrations of chemicals, probably caused by oil spills and ash dumps, said Manmohan Mehta, the state environmental engineer overseeing the project.

Exposure determines risk

Although they are not proven carcinogens, some PAHs could cause cancer, according to the federal Department of Health and Human Services.

"You can find PAHs everywhere, even in your hamburgers," Mehta said.

But not in the high levels — some at 1,000 times more than allowed — found in the American LaFrance soil.

"It takes years of exposure at those cleanup levels to affect someone's health," Mehta said. "The amount of exposure is the important thing."

"We look at the chances that this will affect groundwater and public health," Mehta said. "If there is really no chance of public exposure, we don't make them spend a lot of money to fix it past that."

Other contaminants and materi-

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Manmohan Mehta, state environmental engineer overseeing the project

als found on the property included:

■ Twelve metal or concrete tanks (above and below ground) containing fuel oil, gasoline, paint stripper and wastewater. Some tanks were removed and others were cleaned, according to the conservation department cleanup report on file at the main branch of the Steele Memorial Library in Elmira.

■ High levels of chromium, toluene, lead, manganese, dibenzofuran, chrysene, phenanthrene, pyrene, fluoranthene, beryllium, zinc and cadmium were all found in the soil, and it was removed.

■ Eighty-five capacitors (devices that store electrical charges), each filled with 1.9 gallons of fluids containing polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs — known to cause cancer.

The capacitors were intact and none of the oil leaked into the environment, Mehta said.

Additional traces of PCBs were detected in a retention pond near the school. The pond drains into Coldbrook Creek, Sealey Creek and the Chemung River.

But Mehta said the amount of PCBs in the pond was so minuscule they weren't hazardous. No PCBs

were found in the soil, Mehta said.

American LaFrance conducted its own environmental investigation between 1992 and 1997 and discovered the contamination, according to conservation department reports.

Most of the contaminants at the LaFrance site had been there at least 15 years and probably much longer, Mehta said.

Deal for site cleanup

Scott Technologies, which told the conservation department about the contaminants, voluntarily agreed to clean the property so it can be sold, Mehta said.

The company also agreed to place a restriction on the property deed limiting future use of the site to only industrial or commercial purposes, according to the conservation department report.

In return, the state gives Scott Technologies a limited release from liability for any past environmental damage of the property, the report states.

Kevin Margolis, American LaFrance project manager for Scott Technologies, said the company has spent about \$800,000 to \$900,000 to clean the site.

"The company thinks it was being

a good corporate citizen to volunteer to clean it up on its own, when it had only owned the site for a few years," Margolis said.

The conservation department is reviewing the final cleanup report and is expected to approve or disapprove it within a month, Mehta said.

"Everything that was found on the site is gone," Mehta said. "It no longer poses any public health problems."

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Sun, Mar 24, 2019