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Citizens Alerted to High-Level Solvent Contamination at Emerson Power Transmission Factory Trichloroethylene Vastly Exceeds Groundwater Standard 17 Years After Clean up Required Inadequate Remediation Fails to Resolve Residential Indoor Air Concerns Identified in 1991 Authorities Urged to Clean up Site and Safeguard Public Health Without Further Delay

Toxics Targeting, Inc., a firm that maps environmental hazards using government data, today documented high-level trichloroethylene (TCE) contamination that has not been cleaned up for nearly 17 years at the Emerson Power Transmission Site in Ithaca, NY. Groundwater at the site reportedly exceeds New York clean up standards by up to 5,600-fold and could pose a threat to nearby homes where TCE concerns in indoor air quality were monitored in 1991.

"Hundreds of citizens living and working near EPT could be threatened by toxic hazards that were identified in 1987," said Walter Hang, president of Toxics Targeting. "The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) failure to clean up EPT for nearly two decades calls into question the agency's ability to safeguard the environment and public health," Hang added.

The factory (formerly Morse Industrial Co.) has operated since 1906 and used solvents to degrease power transmission chains. TCE usage peaked at 1,200 gallons/week between 1976 and 1978. TCE can cause central nervous system disorders, cardiac arrhythmia, cancer and other ailments. TCE is persistent and can migrate extensively through groundwater and soils.

In 1991, the New York State Department of Health monitored indoor air in 14 homes near EPT for TCE and other solvents. Four homes were monitored to identify background levels. TCE above background levels was identified in three out of the other ten homes.

Toxics Targeting posted on its web site (www.toxicstargeting.com) and placed in the Tompkins County Library maps and monitoring results documenting historic TCE concentrations up to 1,100,000 parts per billion (ppb) at EPT. New York's groundwater clean up standard for TCE is five ppb. EPT's most recent monitoring results from the fall of 2003 identified TCE in groundwater up to 28,000 ppb.

In 1994, the DEC adopted a Record of Decision that concluded: "Actual or threatened release of hazardous waste constituents from this site, if not addressed by implementing the response action selected in this ROD, presents a current or potential threat to public health and the environment." The ROD principally required a two-phase treatment system to recover TCE in soil vapor and groundwater as well as a study of solvents migrating through soil.

During nearly eight years of operation, EPT's site remediation system has recovered approximately 16 gallons of TCE. The required soil vapor study has not been completed after nearly ten years.

✓ Due to the inadequacy of EPT's site remediation efforts, Toxics Targeting urged the DEC (see letter) to revise the site's Classification Code from #4 (Site is properly closed -- requires continued management.)" to #2 ("Significant threat to the public health or environment -- action required.") That regulatory action was requested as a first step in cleaning up the site without further delay.

Hang concluded, "DEC's extensive efforts to safeguard citizens threatened by solvent contamination in Endicott, NY should now be considered as a model for residents living near EPT." In a landmark decision, IBM Corporation reportedly began equipping more than 400 homes in Endicott with air pollution control systems to prevent solvent contamination from threatening public health. That site was recently reclassified from a Category #4 to a #2 site based on new information regarding solvent contamination originally identified in 1979.