

July 24, 2007:

DEC UPDATE: EMERSON POWER TRANSMISSION CLEANUP IN ITHACA.

Q: What's new?

A: The DEC has reviewed Emerson resubmitted clean-up plan, finding that many concerns have been addressed. Chiefly, Emerson has consented to a comprehensive strategy for sampling soil and groundwater throughout the site, including all areas identified as "areas of concern" on the site. DEC had held this as one of the most important elements of the cleanup.

Q: What does this involve?

A: An issue raised by Emerson was whether it would have to bore through its concrete reservoir, a basin on site to be used in case of fire. The shallow nature of the bedrock also presented challenges to boring. DEC and the company have agreed to employ "directional drilling" techniques that avoid drilling through the tank.

Q: Will that take longer?

A: DEC is giving the company additional time to complete the sampling. The field work was originally to be completed Aug. 31. Now, it will be Oct. 12.

Q: And that pushes everything back?

A: Only slightly. The remedial action is now set to begin July 1, 2008, rather than mid-May.

Q: What do the residents and the state get for this tradeoff?

A: Emerson had raised concerns about whether it could physically meet the Aug. 31 deadline. While accommodating that concern, the DEC is getting a thorough investigation – which is what it wanted.

Q: Couldn't the state just go in and do the work itself – immediately?

A: No. Emerson, like any party involved in a cleanup, would have the right to seek dispute resolution in such an instance, possibly delaying the work even beyond the new timeline. Going in without an agreement with the company likely would have slowed, not sped, the cleanup.

Q: When will everything be finished?

A: DEC's goal is to have the necessary investigation completed this fall in order to evaluate alternatives and select a cleanup plan by this Spring. The selection of a cleanup plan will subject to review and comment by the public. DEC's goal has been to have full cleanup work commenced by the Summer of 2008 and today's approval does not significantly delay that goal. The final completion date will depend on the nature and extent of the remediation plan.