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Former Universal Recycling

Summary Date: April 2010

Status: Cleanup Complete

Location: 400 Sanduri Street, Fairbanks, AK

View detailed information from database on this site.

Database Name: Former Universal Recycling (Fairbanks)

Latitude/Longitiude: See database entry

DEC Contaminated Sites Contact: John Carnahan, Project Manager - 907-451-2166

See DEC Brownfields Webpage

Description

Former Universal Recycling building.

This site is also known as Interior Services, Alaska Solid Waste, or Bartlett Industries. It is located at 400 Sanduri Street, Fairbanks, Alaska, and is approximately 3.4 acres in size. This site is located in a light-industrial area and surrounded by the community landfill, a scrap metal and pipe business, and is approximately 1000 feet from a mobile home park with an estimated 175 mobile homes. The site is currently owned by the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB). The property was offered at the August 2003 tax foreclosure sale, but did not sell.

The site was initially developed in 1985 by Interior Services as a refuse collection and recycling company. In 1986, the site became a recycling center for paper, scrap metal, glass and plastic, along with recycled batteries, waste oil, and miscellaneous items. According to DEC's Solid Waste files, complaints about debris storage practices at the site began in 1989. In March 1991, the permit lapsed but was reissued that same year as a waste-to-energy/recycling facility. A site visit by DEC in March 1991 noted the presence of used-oil on the ground surface from a leaking 55-gallon drum. In 1992, DEC issued a non-compliance report stating that lead-acid batteries were being improperly stored at the site. In 1993, DEC observed several more leaking 55-gallon drums that had caused a sheen on a surrounding puddle. Later in 1993, the permit was suspended due to non-compliance issues related to waste handling and storage practices.

The recycling center had a devastating fire and other business travails, became delinquent in property taxes, and ultimately filed for bankruptcy in 1997. Recycling operations apparently ceased shortly thereafter and the site has remained dormant since. At the conclusion of the bankruptcy proceedings, the property was awarded to a new owner, who also failed to pay the property taxes. The FNSB took the property through tax foreclosure proceedings on June 3, 2003. Shortly after ownership transferred to the Borough, a fire of unknown origin burned portions of the solid waste on site. Soon after, our volunteer-based Emergency Management HAZMAT Response Team, packed approximately forty 55-gallon barrels of unknown substances and placed batteries and transformers into impervious fish totes. Once contained, items were moved to a cement pad centrally located on site. Debris and approximately twenty additional drums remained scattered around the site.

In 2004 the Borough was awarded a DEC Brownfield Assessment, which encompassed a Phase I and limited Phase II environmental site assessment. This assessment work laid the groundwork for the borough to apply for further assessment and cleanup funding from EPA.

Public Health and Environmental Concerns

Drums and debris at former Universal Recycling.

According to the DEC contaminated sites database report, petroleum contamination was first discovered at the site in 1993 during a Solid Waste Inspection. DEC records also indicated barrels of unknown hazardous substances and evidence of an incinerator used for wire burning with the possibility of dioxins.

The site is currently listed as "closure complete" on the contaminated site database. Hazardous materials no longer present at the site included:

- petroleum wastes/products or mixtures of solvents and used-oil
- coolants
- lead-acid batteries (some with casings cracked/leaking)
- transformers that may or may not have contained PCB's
- ash from the burning of wire
- barrels or containers of unknown liquids or chemicals
- scrap appliances that contain Freon

Current Status

In 2005, the Borough was awarded an EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant for $199,998 to complete the site assessment (finish a Phase II, more in-depth, assessment and begin cleanup of the property. The need to clear a large amount of remaining debris from the site prevented completion of the assessment work, and a waste disposal plan was developed. This plan estimates cleanup costs are $604,000. Funding for this cleanup project included a $200,000 EPA cleanup grant with a local match of $40,000, a borough appropriation of $182,000, and a borough tipping fee deferral of up to $182,000. In July of 2008.DEC approved a workplan for site characterization, to describe the extent and type of contamination. The site assessment was completed and several areas of concern were identified. A total of 54 cubic yards of contaminated soil were excavated and removed from the site along with mixed burned debris and ash. Groundwater monitoring occurred in 2004 and 2007 and no contaminants of concern were observed above cleanup levels.

Reuse and Redevelopment

The Borough hopes it will become viable light-industrial property. This redevelopment will create jobs, increase revenue, reduce the tax burden on the community, and address the health risks associated with the contamination.

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