



Summer 2019 Fact Sheet

Working Together: The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) is working with a number of private, tribal, local, state, and federal partners to clean up the Former Hospital-School Pipeline Release contaminated site. Our goal is to protect human health and the environment by investigating the extent of contamination from this historic fuel spill. During the process, ADEC would also like to keep an open line of communication with the community of Kotzebue to ensure environmental needs are met.

Summer 2019 Work



Underground Storage Tank Removal next to the Ferguson building.

The Indian Health Service and Maniilaq Association funded the removal of an old underground storage tank from the Northside of the Ferguson building in August 2019. Tanana Commercial Company and Environmental Management Inc. excavated the tank and dug up 16 cubic yards of petroleum contaminated soil. Workers transported the soil to the Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation landfarm for treatment.

During this effort, the Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs funded groundwater sampling. Tanana Commercial Company collected samples from ten monitoring wells. Sample results found petroleum contamination in the groundwater at eight wells. ADEC provided guidance throughout this project and the Native Village of Kotzebue provided logistical support.

To review the *2019 Underground Storage Tank Removal and Groundwater Monitoring Report* (texts and figures) visit the ADEC website Kotzebue page (located at end of fact sheet).

Next Steps



After the results of the summer 2019 work, we know further groundwater sampling is needed in 2020 to establish a trend of contamination and to see how far groundwater contamination is. A second vapor intrusion study is needed at the June Nelson Elementary School, because different times of the season yield different vapor results. Vapor intrusion can happen when chemicals leak into the soil and groundwater. These chemicals can enter buildings through rising vapor. Certain chemicals can be harmful if breathed indoors, depending on the amount. We will also need to remove historic pipelines on the Former Hospital-School Pipeline Release contaminated site.

Map of Former Hospital-School Pipeline Release contaminated site. Property boundaries are shown in blue and current groundwater monitoring wells are shown as yellow circles. Monitoring wells with contamination above groundwater cleanup levels are circled in red.

History

The Indian Health Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs operated a hospital and school in Kotzebue before Alaska was even a State. The hospital and school were heated by a system of tanks and above and underground pipelines that went throughout the school and hospital properties. During the 1960s there were reports of ruptures and leaks from the pipeline. Fuel seeped into the school (now elementary school) basement, ditches, and local wells. ADEC contracted Shannon and Wilson to conduct an environmental site assessment in 1989 to sample soil, water, the beach, and inventory all remaining tanks. In 2008, local Kotzebue residents noticed sheen on the ocean of Kotzebue Sound. As a result, ADEC contracted an environmental consultant to resample the contaminated soil, beach, and water. In 2015, the Indian Health Service collected soil and water samples across all four lots of the original school and hospital property. In winter 2018, the Northwest Arctic Borough sampled the air in the elementary school for any fuel vapors. In winter 2019, the project partners did a desk top inventory of all known tanks and pipelines at the site.

Questions or Comments?

ADEC welcomes all questions or comments. Please contact the ADEC project manager or public involvement specialist. You may call, email, or visit our office and website.

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