

Former Houston Wood Preserving Works Site



HISTORY

The Southern Pacific Transportation Company (Southern Pacific) conducted wood treating operations at the property located at 4910 Liberty Road in Houston, known as the Houston Wood Preserving Works (HWPW), from 1911 to 1984. Union Pacific Railroad (Union Pacific) acquired the property through its merger with Southern Pacific in 1997.

Southern Pacific began cleanup efforts under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) cleanup program, which were supervised by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ).

Following the merger, Union Pacific continued the cleanup work that Southern Pacific began. The work is still performed under the authority of a federal RCRA permit, which dictates how investigations and cleanup activities are conducted at the site. The permit requires Union Pacific to adhere to all applicable environmental laws and regulations and coordinate all investigations and cleanup activities with the TCEQ. All work at the site has been reviewed, approved and conducted under TCEQ's oversight.

WORK ACCOMPLISHED AT THE SITE

Scientists, engineers and other experts have conducted environmental studies, assessments and cleanup work at this location for 30 years, with input and supervision from state and federal regulatory authorities. Work has focused on determining if there are potential exposure pathways to people near the site. Test results do not show impacted soil or groundwater exposure to residents.

Here is what the environmental work has accomplished:

- Union Pacific conducted the TCEQ-approved soil remediation at the site in 2016, including soil excavation and consolidation to prevent exposure. Soil samples near the residential properties do not show impacts above TCEQ risk-based levels.
- Property owners identified within the groundwater plume area were notified of groundwater impacts, consistent with TCEQ requirements and informed there is no exposure risk because all residential properties in the area receive drinking water from the City of Houston.

- A combination of water-well surveys and public meetings have identified no groundwater wells for domestic use in the area. The City of Houston Health Department recently re-tested the drinking water in the area and notified the public that the drinking water is safe.
- A creosote recovery program has been implemented to remove creosote from groundwater.
- Extensive off-site soil gas and groundwater tests do not indicate the potential for vapor intrusion.
- The City of Houston Health Department conducted an independent soil gas sampling study in October-November 2020. Based on the results from 40 sample locations, the City of Houston Health Department website stated that *"very few contaminants were detected and those that were detected were very low levels, close to the reporting limit. These data do not indicate inhalation risk from soil vapor contamination."*

The work accomplished at the site is described in more detail in the environmental reports and RCRA Permit Renewal Application submitted to the TCEQ, available for public review upon request through the TCEQ, or on the Union Pacific project website www.hwpwinfo.com.

CURRENT SITE STATUS

Union Pacific continues to work cooperatively with all governmental authorities and in full compliance with all legal requirements applicable to site activities, including timely responses to TCEQ requests for additional information for the RCRA Permit Renewal Application. Union Pacific will continue to work with the regulatory officials to ensure that its work at the site is in full compliance with all state and federal laws. A revised Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was submitted to the TCEQ in August 2020 detailing the proposed response actions for the on-site and off-site groundwater plume. The revised RAP is available for public review at www.hwpwinfo.com. On-going environmental efforts being conducted include:

- Union Pacific will continue groundwater monitoring at the site under TCEQ oversight to update existing data and monitor the stability of the historic plume.
- Union Pacific will continue performing routine inspections of the remediated areas to ensure the protective barriers are in place.
- Union Pacific will continue to recover creosote from impacted groundwater where technically feasible. Testing outside of the site found creosote located typically deeper than 25 feet below ground surface and as deep as 65 feet below ground surface. The depth combined with the difficult nature of creosote make complete removal infeasible.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND UPDATES

Union Pacific and TCEQ have regularly reached out to people in the area to provide information regarding site progress and activities. Union Pacific welcomes input from the public and will continue to provide updates regarding site activities.

- Since the early stages of the regulatory process, TCEQ has conducted public meetings to inform the public about the EPA's RCRA permit process, how the site will be addressed and to answer any questions.
- Union Pacific also conducted community meetings and public presentations to inform and update residents about the site, in addition to making site representatives available to address questions or concerns.
- The company also sent a series of letters to known property owners in the area to provide formal notification of available data that had been collected, the status of site activities, and information on how to contact the appropriate TCEQ and Union Pacific representatives with any questions or concerns about the site.
- TCEQ and Union Pacific will be holding a public meeting to discuss the RCRA Permit Renewal Application including the revised RAP. The schedule and details of the public meeting will be forthcoming.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Additional information and updates regarding site activities are posted at www.hwpwinfo.com. Inquiries regarding the site can be directed to the following Union Pacific representatives.

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