

FREDERICK TOWN GAS (MD-164)
Frederick County, Maryland

Site Location

The Fredrick Town Gas site is a 1.1-acre former gas manufacturing facility located at 350 East Church Street in Frederick, Maryland. The current use of the site includes vehicle parking and storage, propane distribution and equipment maintenance. A maintenance facility and an office are operated on the property by Potomac Edison.

Site History

Frederick Gas Company has owned and operated the site since 1952. The original gas plant facility on the property is thought to have been constructed by the Isabella Gas Works between 1875 and 1884. The facility was small and used direct gasification of coal retorts in the absence of air to produce coal gas which was used primarily for lighting.

In 1904, Frederick Gas & Electric Company was formed from the consolidation of several smaller gas and electric companies. At this time, the facility was modernized and the gas production processes were improved and upgraded. In 1912, gas production was increased when a 50,000 ft³ gas holder and an 80,000 gallon aboveground tar tank were constructed.

In 1923, consolidation of Frederick Gas & Electric with other utility companies resulted in the formation of Potomac Edison Company. Operations at the facility increased further to include a 100,000 ft³ above-ground holder and the old 50,000 ft³ holder was converted to a relief holder. In 1936, the use of heavy oil in the production process led to the addition of a 20,000 gallon heavy oil storage tank.

In 1950, Mr. Raymond Brehant formed the Frederick Gas Company by purchasing gas plant assets from the Potomac Edison Company. He converted the distribution system to supply natural gas in 1952. Much of the plant was demolished between 1955 and 1959. The 50,000 ft³ relief holder, dehydrator box and 80,000 gallon tar storage tank were excavated and reportedly razed with many of the buildings. In 1964, stock of Frederick Gas Company was acquired by Washington Gas Light Company; Frederick Gas is now a subsidiary of Washington Gas.

Environmental Investigations

In 1985, the State of Maryland conducted a Preliminary Assessment of the Frederick Town Gas site. The report cited unknown disposal practices and possible spillage as reasons for further study. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designated the site as "No Further Remedial Action Planned."

By the late 1980s-early 1990s, environmental investigations indicated contamination in the soil and groundwater at the site, including free-phase coal tar product.

In 1990, a Risk Assessment was completed. The closest known drinking water well, over a half-mile from the site, is not known to be impacted. The primary concern and difficulty with the site is the karst geology.

Current Status

In 1994, a recovery system was installed and implemented. Currently, tar is recovered semi-annually. As of April 2002, over 500 gallons of tar have been recovered. Groundwater monitoring is also being conducted annually for volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, cyanide, and metals.

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