

Pomonkey Launch and Control (MD-217/218, W-54)
Pomonkey, Maryland
Charles County

Site Description

Pomonkey Launch and Control (PLC) comprises two areas, the former Battery Control Area and the former Launch Areas. The former Pomonkey Battery Control Area is located on 13.5 acres. The site is bordered to the north by agricultural land, to the south and west by woods, and to the east by rural residential properties. The Battery Control Area is not connected to the public water supply, instead drawing water from an on-site well. Several residential wells are also located within 0.5 miles of the site.

The Pomonkey Launch Area is still owned by the U. S. Government, which operated the site in April 1998 as the Naval Research Laboratory (NRL) Pomonkey Annex. Structures on the site included two former missile launching pads and separate fueling, generator, assembly, storage, and wastewater disposal areas. The site is surrounded by wooded areas.

Site History

PLC was a Nike missile site and part of the Washington Area Defense System, which was constructed, operated and deactivated between 1954 and the early 1970s. The Battery Control Area contained all radar, guidance, electronic, and communication equipment for missile guidance and fire control. The Launch Area contained the facilities to assemble, test, and maintain the missiles and associated launchers. Maintenance facilities included a motor pool and generator building, which contained a gravel pit sump where oil, solvents, and paints were routinely dumped and allowed to soak into the ground.

The U.S. Government acquired the land for the Battery Control Area in 1954 and operated it until 1965, when the site was deactivated. In January 1965, the Charles County Board of Education acquired the land. As of 1987, the site was occupied by the Charles County Alternative School and the Horizon Center, which was operated by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Environmental Investigations

Waste Management personnel noted two leaking and three abandoned transformers during an initial visit to the Battery Control Area on October 4, 1985. Analysis of soil under and around these transformers detected polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at 5.6 and 6.3 mg/kg. These results were determined to show "no levels of PCBs above the acceptable limits." Subsequent sampling on October 21 and November 12 of the on-site well did not detect volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the well. Approximately 25 surrounding residential wells were sampled for VOCs between November 12, 1985 and July 31, 1986. Initial and confirmatory samples showed no detections of VOCs.

A Site Inspection (SI) of the former Launch Area was completed in October 1991. Five monitoring wells were installed and sampled as part of this study. Subsurface soil samples were collected from the well borings, and surface and subsurface samples were collected from an additional nineteen locations. Results of the sampling showed that only lead concentrations in three groundwater samples exceeded regulatory standards. The SI concluded that former operations at the former Launch Area had minimal impact on the environment, but that additional monitoring of lead levels in groundwater should be conducted before future groundwater use. The report recommended that no Remedial Investigation was needed at the site. From October 1995 to July 1997, eight rounds of groundwater monitoring were performed at the former Launch Area. During these events, lead was not detected above regulatory standards.

Contact

John Fairbank
Division Chief

Maryland Department of the Environment
NPL Superfund/Federal Facilities Division

(410) 537-3440