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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Environmental Investigation at the Hi-Shear Corporation Site
2600 Skypark Drive, Torrance, California
August 20, 2019

What should I know about this site?

Past and current on-site activities conducted by Hi-Shear Corporation ("Hi-Shear") since 1954 include manufacturing fasteners for the aerospace industry. Hi-Shear's use of chemicals during the fastener manufacturing processes generated chemical wastes containing volatile organic compounds ("VOCs"), primarily trichloroethene ("TCE") and tetrachloroethene ("PCE"), which discharged to the ground, resulting in the contamination of soil, soil vapor, and groundwater underneath the site. The VOCs in soil vapor and groundwater have migrated off-site. The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board ("Los Angeles Water Board") is the regulatory agency responsible for overseeing the environmental investigation and cleanup work at the site, and is requiring and supervising additional soil, soil vapor, and groundwater sampling on-site and off-site. All work is being done in accordance with California Environmental Protection Agency ("CalEPA") regulatory requirements.

Who is monitoring the investigation?

In accordance with CalEPA regulatory requirements, the Los Angeles Water Board is responsible for reviewing, approving, and monitoring the investigation and cleanup of the site. The Los Angeles Water Board is part of the State Water Resources Control Board, which is a part of CalEPA. The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment ("OEHHA"), which is also a part of CalEPA, assists the Los Angeles Water Board with assessing health risks posed by environmental contaminants at the site.

What is vapor intrusion?

Vapor intrusion is the movement of vapor-forming chemicals (e.g. VOCs) from an underground source such as contaminated soil and/or groundwater, into the indoor air of an overlying building.

What are VOCs?

VOCs are chemicals that are contained in products commonly used in industry as well as in the home. Products containing VOCs include paints, paint strippers, cleaning supplies, and markers. VOCs are also found in car exhaust, cigarette smoke, air fresheners and other scented materials, dry cleaned clothes, gardening chemicals, and fuel.

What is TCE?

Trichloroethylene (referred to as trichloroethene or TCE) is a VOC that is used as a solvent for degreasing metal parts during the manufacture of a variety of products. It can be found in consumer products, including some wood finishes, adhesives, paint removers, and stain removers. Due to its widespread use, very low levels of TCE are common in the air of homes and businesses and in outdoor air in urban areas.

What is PCE?

Tetrachloroethylene (referred to as tetrachloroethene or PCE) is a VOC that is commonly used in dry cleaning and metal degreasing. It is also used to make other chemicals and can be found in some consumer products. Similar to TCE, PCE is also volatile, highly stable, and nonflammable at room temperature.

Does this site pose a danger to those living near the site?

Additional soil, soil vapor, and groundwater evaluations are necessary to identify any potential health risks. Hi-Shear must first collect the additional data as proposed in their work plan and approved by the Los Angeles Water Board to determine the contamination levels and where the contamination extends off-site.

How long will the investigation take?

The investigation is ongoing and is expected to take several months. Many of the locations to the east of Crenshaw Boulevard are located in the City of Lomita's public right of way and Hi-Shear is working with the City of Lomita to conduct this sampling. The duration of the investigation will be impacted by the length of time it takes to obtain the access agreement for sampling at all planned locations, which include the public right of way within the City of Lomita and on private properties.

How will the Los Angeles Water Board ensure that the work performed is of high quality and reliable?

The contractor conducting the environmental work on behalf of Hi-Shear is required at all times to comply with all applicable State laws, rules, regulations, and local ordinances, including but not limited to, environmental, procurement and safety laws, rules, regulations, and ordinances. All data collected will be reviewed by the Los Angeles Water Board staff with the assistance of OEHHA. The Los Angeles Water Board staff will conduct inspections during field investigations to ensure the work being performed is in compliance with the approved work plan(s).

If I live over the contamination, are there risks associated with eating homegrown fruits and vegetables, should I throw them out?

Based on the data collected to date, the only known way people living in the area might be exposed to VOCs associated with the release at the site is through vapor intrusion to indoor air from vapors in the soil beneath buildings. There is no data to suggest that there is any issue with contamination in fruits and vegetables. Additionally, these chemicals are not a concern outdoors, as the compounds naturally dissipate once they reach the open air.

Should I get my home sampled for VOCs?

The Los Angeles Water Board is directing Hi-Shear to collect additional soil vapor data in the public right of way in the City of Lomita and on private properties. Following results from this phase of the investigation, the Los Angeles Water Board will evaluate the data and determine what the next phase of the investigation should be; this may include collection of additional soil vapor data or indoor air testing of homes. If you choose to get your home sampled independently, we request that you provide a copy of the sampling results to the Los Angeles Water Board to aid the investigation.

Why am I learning about this contamination now?

Previous investigations and cleanup actions were focused on the Hi-Shear property itself. Since recent data indicates that the soil vapor and groundwater plume have migrated off-site and additional data collection is needed off-site, all potentially affected residents and interested parties are being notified.

Is my drinking water safe?

Yes. Your drinking water is provided by Torrance Municipal Water for the residents of the City of Torrance and by the City of Lomita for the residents of the City of Lomita, and it meets state and federal standards for quality.

The results of the water quality testing conducted by Torrance Municipal Water can be viewed online at: https://www.torranceca.gov/our-city/public-works/water-services/torrance-municipal-water-customer-information

The results of the water quality testing conducted by the City of Lomita can be viewed online at: https://www.lomitawater.com/oversight/water-quality-reports/

What are the next steps?

The next steps of this project involve determining the off-site extent and concentrations of VOCs in soil vapor and groundwater originating from the Hi-Shear site. Project updates will be shared with the community via:

- http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report.asp?global_id=SL204231523
- Factsheets
- Community Meetings.

How do I get more information?

If you would like to review work plans or other technical documents for this site, please visit any of the information repositories listed in the enclosed fact sheet. If you would like to talk with someone about the investigation, please contact Ms. Susana Lagudis of the Los Angeles Water Board, at (213) 576-6694 or susana.lagudis@waterboards.ca.gov.

The goals of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board's site cleanup program are to protect and restore water resources and enforce stringent goals to protect human health, water quality and the environment, today and into the future