

At the direction of the District of Columbia Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE), and in accordance with DC rules and regulations, Washington Gas is conducting an environmental investigation at the above referenced site.

BACKGROUND

Prior to the widespread availability of natural gas, gas was “manufactured” through a process of heating coal (and other fuels) in specialized ovens. These gas manufacturing facilities, called Manufactured Gas Plants (MGP), were common in many urban areas of the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Manufactured gas was used for residential and street lighting and cooking. The manufactured gas process produced byproducts, such as coal tar and other chemicals used in the chemical, dye, and pharmaceutical industries. Some byproducts may remain underground in the areas of historic MGP operations, consistent with practices of the time.

Washington Gas once owned and operated an MGP known as the “West Station Gas Works” in Washington, D.C. As the first federally-chartered gas company in the U.S., Washington Gas was responsible for providing light to the Capitol and the White House, among other things. To meet gas production requirements, Washington Gas manufactured gas from coal at the site using existing technologies.

As technologies advanced, and with the development of environmental law in the latter part of the 20th Century, both industry and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) began to identify and investigate the potential presence of historical byproducts and take remedial steps if needed to protect human health and the environment.

WHERE IS THE SITE?

The former West Station Gas Works was built in 1858 and was located near what is currently the intersection of New Hampshire Avenue NW and Virginia Avenue NW, in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. A majority of the Site was

located within the area generally bound by Virginia Avenue NW to the northeast, New Hampshire Avenue NW to the southeast, F Street NW to the south, and the Potomac River to the west.

WHEN DID THE FORMER PLANT OPERATE?

The former West Station Gas Works operated from 1858 through 1946, when it was decommissioned. In accordance with the practice of the day, the former plant’s aboveground structures were demolished to ground surface between the late 1940s and late 1950s, with soil placed in gas holder foundations. Efforts were made at the time to remove the plant’s piping, tanks, and other structures. However, some remnants and associated byproducts from MGP operations may remain buried below ground as was common with MGP decommissioning at the time.

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO DATE?

In 1998, Washington Gas performed an indoor air quality assessment in each of the six buildings in the Watergate Complex, they include: 2700 Virginia Avenue NW, 2600 Virginia Avenue NW, 2650 Virginia Avenue NW, 2500-2560 Virginia Avenue NW, 600 New Hampshire Avenue NW, and 700 New Hampshire Avenue NW. This testing did not identify MGP-related chemicals in the air above detection limits that were achievable at the time.

In addition, Washington Gas installed a depressurization system in the Watergate East boiler room of 2500-2560 Virginia Avenue NW in 1978 to relieve hydrostatic pressure. Groundwater from the depressurization system is filtered prior to discharge into the sanitary sewer system under a permit. This system has been in operation for more than 30 years. Vicinity Energy assumed operation of the system in 2018.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES?

In accordance with a directive from DOEE, Washington Gas submitted a draft Site Investigation Work Plan for regulatory review in January 2024 to allow Washington Gas to take a comprehensive approach to this

project. In April 2024, DOEE gave approval to begin implementation of the Site Investigation. The Work Plan includes investigation details for soil, groundwater, surface water, sediment, and indoor air quality. Washington Gas has engaged GEI Consulting, Inc. (GEI), a company with extensive MGP-related experience to develop and assist Washington Gas with implementing the investigation under DOEE oversight.

Planning for all aspects of the investigation is underway. Initial activities in 2024 will begin with collection of indoor air, soil, and groundwater samples.

Indoor Air Sampling

Indoor air samples will be collected from the basement(s) and/or lowest levels of buildings located within the footprint of the former MGP site. The six buildings of the Watergate Complex, Potomac Plaza Apartments (2475 Virginia Avenue NW), Potomac Plaza Terraces (730 24th Street NW), and Western Presbyterian Church (2401 Virginia Avenue NW). Owners of all buildings where indoor air sampling will take place have been contacted. The work will be performed in coordination with the individual property owners through their management representatives.

Two rounds of sampling will be performed. One in the warm summer months when the air conditioning is running, and one in the colder winter months when the heating system is running. Background (indoor) and ambient (outdoor) air samples will be collected in parallel at locations where the former MGP is not likely to be a contributing source to potential constituents of concern that could be measured.

Soil Sampling

Soil sampling is anticipated to begin in late July or August 2024 and continue through the remainder of the year. Work will begin along the Potomac River in an area where our investigation overlaps with the DC Water Potomac River Tunnel project near Rock Creek Trail, west of the Watergate Complex (near CSO 22). No road closures are expected for Washington Gas' work in this location. To ensure safety of pedestrians and vehicles while work is performed, signs will be posted to mark the work zone.

Groundwater Sampling

Groundwater will be investigated through installation and sampling of a network of groundwater monitoring wells.

WHAT ARE THE MATERIALS OF CONCERN?

Compounds considered to be of potential concern that are the focus of the Washington Gas investigation include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylene(s), and naphthalene (BTEXN).

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

While the constituents that are the focus of this investigation can pose a risk if swallowed, this is unlikely. Groundwater, where MGP constituents may be found, is not used for drinking purposes, nor is there typically ingestion of soil below the ground surface. In addition, the majority of the Site is covered by a mix of buildings, roadways, some vegetation, and concrete. Collectively these features reduce the potential for direct contact.

MGP-related chemicals were not identified above detection limits during indoor air quality assessments performed in 1998 at each of the six buildings in the Watergate Complex. The planned indoor air assessment will provide updated indoor air quality information for comparison with currently applicable indoor air risk levels.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Future Project Updates will be issued as the investigation continues.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Washington Gas project team.

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A Washington Gas Community Liaison will respond to your message.