

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

Indoor Air Sampling

In spring 2024, GEI developed building-specific work plans to perform indoor air quality assessments for the buildings located within the footprint of the former MGP site: the six buildings of the Watergate Complex (2700 Virginia Ave. NW, 2600 Virginia Ave. NW, 2650 Virginia Ave. NW, 2500-2560 Virginia Ave. NW, 600 New Hampshire Ave. NW, and 700 New Hampshire Ave. NW) and Potomac Plaza Apartments (2475 Virginia Ave. NW), Potomac Plaza Terraces (730 24th St. NW), and Western Presbyterian Church (2401 Virginia Ave. NW).

DOEE reviewed the work plans and approved Washington Gas to perform two rounds of indoor air sampling – one round in the cooling season and one round in the heating season. One round of sampling during each season is required because air conditioning and heating systems influence how air flows within a building.

GEI completed the first round by mid-September 2024, in coordination with the individual property owners through their management representatives. Samples were collected from within the basement(s) and/or lowest levels of each building. Ambient air samples were collected from outdoor locations.

The second round of sampling is planned for the first quarter of 2025. Results from both rounds of sampling are required before an assessment of indoor air conditions at each building can be completed.

Soil and Groundwater Sampling

In late August, GEI began soil sampling 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). This work was completed in October 2024.

Soil sampling will continue through January 2025 on or near each of the properties located within the former MGP footprint and near the Thompson Boat Center.

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

GEI is working with DOEE to finalize all sampling locations based upon the presence of utilities and subsurface conditions. GEI is conducting this work in coordination with building managers and DC police, if needed, with pedestrian and vehicle safety in mind.

A fenced-in storage area for construction equipment and materials is established on the grassy area along the northern side of the Rock Creek Park Thompson Boat Center parking lot.

Surface Water and Sediment Sampling

In spring 2025, sampling of Potomac River surface water and sediments is planned. This work will be coordinated with Thompson Boat Center, NPS, USACE, and DOEE.

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

We encourage you to visit our project website:

www.WestStationProject.com



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

By Phone: (202) 964-5140

By Email: comments@weststationproject.com