
The Former General Electric Aircraft Engines Facility



Agreed Order Available for Public Comment

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the General Electric Company (GE) have agreed on activities to continue cleaning up the former General Electric Aircraft Engines Facility - Dawson Plant (Plant) located at 220 South Dawson Street, Seattle, WA. Past practices at the site resulted in spills and leaks of solvents and other materials to soil and groundwater.

This agreement is in a proposed Order that specifies studies to more fully define the extent of contamination in the ground water and activities to speed the cleanup. Also, if the studies show contamination in the shallow groundwater originating from the Plant site, GE will determine if chemical vapors are flowing from shallow groundwater into buildings through additional ground water testing, computer modeling, and/or indoor air testing.

Ecology has issued a draft State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) determination of

non-significance (DNS) for these activities.

Based on current information, Ecology has determined that the site does not pose an immediate threat to human health or the environment. People obtain drinking water from the City of Seattle. Also, the contamination appears to be mostly deeper underground, so chemical vapors would be unable to flow up into buildings.

To be considered, written comments on the Order and the draft SEPA DNS must be submitted to Ecology or post-marked by August 29, 2002. Ecology will hold a public meeting to receive comments on the proposed Order if ten or more persons request a public meeting in writing before the end of the public comment period.

An Agreed Order is a legal document between Ecology and GE to ensure that proposed actions will meet the requirements of federal and state laws regarding cleanup of contaminated sites.

July 2002

SEND COMMENTS TO:

Dean Yasuda (Site Manager)
3190 160th Ave. S.E.,
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452
(425) 649-7264
dyas461@ecy.wa.gov

To be considered, written comments must be submitted to Ecology or post-marked by August 29, 2002.

INFORMATION REPOSITORY

Review information on the site at:

Holly Park Library

7058 32nd Ave. South, Suite 104
Seattle, WA 98118
(206) 386-1905

Monday & Wednesday: 1 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Tuesday & Thursday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Friday: 11:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Department of Ecology

Northwest Regional Office
Attn: Sally Perkins
3190 160th Avenue S.E.
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452
(425) 649-7190

For language translations assistance or to obtain documents in alternate format, call Dean Yasuda at (425) 649-7264, or (425) 649-4259 (TDD). E-mail address: dyas461@ecy.wa.gov

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Site Background

The former General Electric Aircraft Engines Facility (Plant) was located at 220 South Dawson Street, Seattle, Washington. GE occupied the premises in 1949 and began to manufacture and repair aircraft engine parts in 1959. Manufacturing operations ceased in 1994. GE continued to use the property for office and warehouse space through 1996.

As the result of producing and testing aircraft parts, GE generated and stored dangerous wastes (*dangerous waste* is the Washington state term for *hazardous waste*). Therefore, under state and federal law, GE was considered to be the owner and operator of a dangerous waste management facility.

Since 1996, the building has been used for various warehousing operations. Vacated by GE in 1997, it is now occupied by another tenant. No dangerous wastes are stored on-site.

In 1980, under new rules regulating hazardous waste, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) required existing facilities to submit a Part A Permit Application to continue to store dangerous waste. GE filed a Part A Permit Application at that time. The facility was granted *interim status* to store dangerous wastes in 55-gallon drums. Interim status allows facilities to continue operating until the regulatory agencies can process the application for a permit.

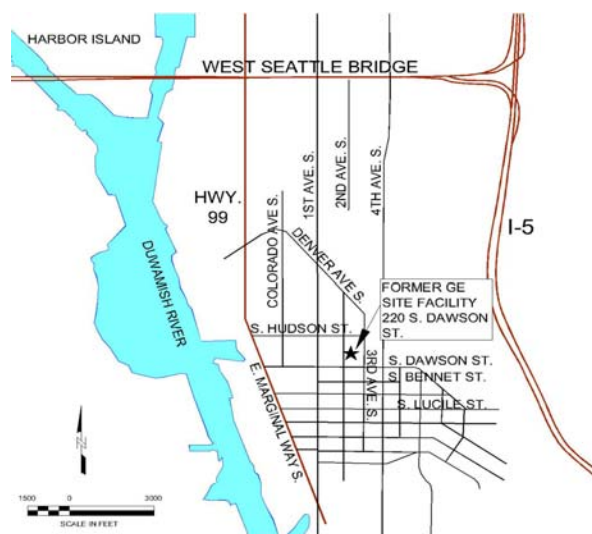
Under state and federal laws, facilities that must have a permit to store dangerous wastes must conduct *corrective action*. Corrective action is studying releases of dangerous constituents at and from the facility and cleaning up releases as needed to protect human health and the environment.

At the Plant, dangerous chemicals entered soils and groundwater at specific points. The releases were mainly from routine spills and from leaks from sumps and tanks. Examples of released substances are solvents, fuels, and oils. The plume of contaminated ground water, which is about 100' wide, extends from the site westward to at least 1st Avenue South. Ground water flows westerly to southwesterly in this area. At this time, Ecology and GE have no groundwater data west of 1st Avenue South.

Buildings over the plume of contamination are used for commercial and industrial purposes. Though residential areas are within ½ mile of the site, they are east and south of the property. Since groundwater in the area is moving from east to west or southwest, Ecology expects residences to remain far outside the plume of contamination.

Some Studies Completed

GE has already completed a study of the groundwater contamination and methods to clean it up. The Washington State cleanup rules, which implement the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA), allow companies to do such studies independently, and then submit the results to Ecology. Ecology has reviewed GE's reports and is requiring more work under the proposed Order. Also, GE has already removed contaminated soils and installed and operated a system to pump contaminated groundwater and prevent more migration of chemicals off the site.



Work required by the Order

Work to be performed under the proposed Order includes:

- Install a new ground water extraction well at the site.
- Operate and maintain the new extraction well and one of the existing extraction wells. This will speed the cleanup. The only other existing extraction well will have no impact on the cleanup, so GE will stop using it.

The extraction system will pump contaminated groundwater from beneath the facility, and then discharge it to the sewer under an existing King County permit. This will also keep the contaminated groundwater from moving away from the site.

- Sample ground water to better define how far the contamination has moved from the site. Sampling will also provide data on how deep the contaminated ground water is.

Based on data in GE's reports, Ecology believes that the off-site contamination is mainly in the deeper ground water.

- Identify other sources of ground water contamination, if any, west of the Plant. GE will sample ground water one more block west. GE will sample further west if the results show that chemicals released from the Plant are present at levels above those protective of human health and the environment.
- Install more groundwater monitoring wells to do the sampling described above.
- GE will also test to be very sure that ground water closer to the surface has very low levels of contamination, if any.

In the unlikely event that contamination from the Plant is present in the shallow groundwater at levels that are higher than allowed under state standards, GE and Ecology will talk to the owners of buildings over the contaminant plume. GE and Ecology will explain what has been found and ask for permission to do more work in the buildings. This may include testing ground water and/or indoor air quality or doing computer modeling. In computer modeling, technical experts estimate the amount of chemical vapors in buildings based on the amount of the vapors in the groundwater and on the possible routes for the vapors to move into buildings.

This testing will show whether chemical vapors are flowing from shallow groundwater into buildings. Ecology and GE will evaluate the results to determine the effects, if any, on people working in the buildings.

Sampling the ground water to determine the extent of the contamination will start right after the Order is finalized. Ecology estimates that within six months of that, GE will begin operating the new groundwater extraction well.

GE will submit quarterly progress reports to Ecology for the first year and semi-annually thereafter. These reports will be available in the information repositories (see page 1). All work under the Order is expected to be done in about four years. At that time, GE and Ecology will reconvene to discuss the appropriate final remedy for the site.

Environmental and Health Concerns

Based on existing reports, Ecology has determined that this site does not pose an immediate threat to human health and the environment.

The current ground water extraction well located on the west side of the Plant is preventing more contamination from moving offsite. People drink water provided by the City of Seattle. Areas above the known plume of contamination are zoned and used for general industrial purposes. Areas west of 1st Avenue South, which will be tested under the Order, are also zoned and used for general industrial purposes.

Ecology expects that installing and operating the new extraction well at the Plant will speed the cleanup. It will also significantly reduce or eliminate the flow of vapors from the contaminated groundwater into the building on-site. This building is used as a warehouse.

Based on available information, the contamination that has moved off-site appears to be too deep underground for chemical vapors to flow up into buildings. If work under the Order shows contamination from the GE Plant is in the off-site shallow groundwater, then GE will follow up with more ground water sampling, computer modeling, and/or indoor air testing in and around the buildings

located above this contamination. Ecology and GE will make sure to provide the results of the tests to people who own and work in these buildings.

If through the course of the studies, Ecology finds that environmental and health concerns exist, the department will immediately notify those affected.

Draft SEPA Determination

An environmental checklist was completed for the proposed studies and extraction system. After reviewing the checklist, Ecology determined that an environmental impact statement was not needed. Therefore, Ecology issued a draft SEPA DNS for these actions.

Public Comment Sought

The public is invited to comment on the proposed Order and the draft SEPA DNS during the 30-day public comment period from July 30, 2002 through August 29, 2002. Interested persons may review the documents at the information repositories. (See box on the first page for location information.) Ecology will hold a public meeting to discuss the Order and work plan if ten or more people submit a



Washington State Department of Ecology
3190 160th Avenue SE
Bellevue, WA 98008-5452

Important Information About Former GE Facility Proposed Interim Action Cleanup

written request before the end of the public comment period. Written requests must be submitted by or postmarked by August 29, 2002. All written requests must state the nature of the issues to be raised in a public meeting. Please send written requests to Dean Yasuda at the addresses on page 1.

What Happens Next?

Ecology will review and evaluate all comments received by the deadline (see page 1). If significant comments are received, the Order and work plan may be modified. Afterwards, GE and Ecology will sign the Order. Those who comment, and anyone who asks for it, will receive a copy of the responsiveness summary.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the proposed work at the Plant or on the Ecology draft SEPA DNS, please contact Mr. Dean Yasuda, Washington Department of Ecology at (425) 649-7264. For email and mailing addresses, see page 1.