

## **Report 00.420**

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Report to the Environment Committee  
from Mary Manastyrski, Resource Quality Officer and John Sherriff, Manager Resource  
Investigations

### **Contaminated Site Investigation Programme**

#### **1. Purpose**

To outline the strategy proposed for future contaminated site investigations by the Wellington Regional Council.

#### **2. Background**

To date the Council's approach to contaminated site management has two main components. The first component has been to develop and maintain a database of known contaminated sites and sites which, because of activities that have occurred or are occurring on them, have a potential to be contaminated. This information is made available to territorial authorities to ensure that they can effectively carry out their functions under the Local Government Act 1974 and Building Act 1991. (Territorial authorities are bound to provide information about the likely presence of hazardous substances on specific sites when requested.) This information is also made available to the public on a site by site basis upon request.

The overall philosophy behind this approach is to ensure that information about contamination at any site is available so that owners, occupiers, potential purchasers or developers of sites can make rational and informed decisions.

The second component of the Council's approach has been to investigate sites which have a greater potential to cause adverse off-site effects. If a site is found to be causing these effects then we require that the owner or occupier take action to avoid, remedy or mitigate these effects.

The Regional Plan for Discharges to Land identified five categories of contaminated sites as having the highest priority for investigation and assessment. These were:

- current and closed landfills;
- old gasworks sites;

- underground storage tanks;
- timber treatment plants and storage sites; and
- munitions and military equipment dumps.

Since 1995, the Council has progressively investigated and assessed the environmental risks associated with these sites. In summary these investigations have involved:

### ***Current and Closed Landfills***

Operational landfills have been identified. Landfill operators have been required to apply for resource consents.

Closed landfill sites have been identified. Site histories have been developed for these sites. An extensive monitoring programme has been undertaken at sites perceived to present an environmental risk to assess whether these sites are causing adverse off-site environmental effects.

### ***Gasworks Sites***

Former gasworks sites have been identified and site histories have been developed. Further investigation has been undertaken around the former Wellington Gas Company site to determine environmental effects.

### ***Underground Storage Tanks***

Sites where underground storage tanks are or have been located have been identified. As new underground tanks are installed, they are added to our register.

### ***Timber Treatment Sites***

Sites used for timber treatment activities have been identified and site histories have been developed. Further investigations have been undertaken at sites perceived to present an environmental risk to assess whether adverse off-site effects are occurring.

### ***Munitions Sites***

Former munitions sites have been identified, cross-referenced and site histories have been developed. (See separate report.)

Now that these assessments of the five priority categories have been completed, we need to decide on future action.

### 3. Future Work

Our future involvement in contaminated site investigations is likely to be influenced by policies currently being developed by the Ministry for the Environment. The Ministry is preparing an orphan sites policy which sets out a framework for funding the clean up of contaminated sites where :

- (i) the current owner is not responsible for causing the contamination and the polluter cannot be found; or
- (ii) no site owner can be readily identifiable; or
- (iii) the environment effects arising from a site are significant but the owner does not have the ability to pay for the site clean up.

This policy is currently in a draft form and has recently been open for comment by local authorities.

The policy, as currently written, relies heavily on Regional Councils identifying orphan sites in their Regions, assessing whether the sites fit the orphan site criteria (including identifying the polluter and assessing their ability to pay), and undertaking preliminary investigations to quantify the environmental risks associated with these sites. There is also an expectation that Regional Councils and territorial authorities will contribute to the costs of cleaning up these sites.

It is uncertain when the orphan site policy will be implemented, or what its final form will be. While this policy is being developed, it is proposed that the Council turn its attention to investigating the sites included on the contaminated site database which it either owns or occupies. These sites are:

- Ex Hukinga Sawmill site, Upper Hutt
- Ava Park, Petone
- Precast Systems Ltd site, Upper Hutt
- Ex Firth site, Lower Hutt
- Queen Elizabeth Park, Paekakariki
- Te Marua Water Treatment Plant
- Winstones Aggregates site, Otaki
- WRC workshops, Masterton
- Ex gasworks site, West Street, Greytown

The purpose of these investigations will be:

- (i) to confirm whether or not the sites are contaminated,
- (ii) if so, to identify the steps necessary to remediate the sites to an appropriate standard; and
- (iii) if it is feasible, to undertake this remedial action.

This approach serves several purposes. It ensures that the Council:

- (i) is able to fulfil its legal requirement to identify and disclose its environmental liabilities when it produces its Annual Financial Report;
- (ii) acts in an environmentally responsible manner; and

- (iii) provides a positive example to the owners and occupiers of other contaminated or potentially contaminated sites.

The budget proposals currently being considered by the Council have been formulated on the basis of this strategy.

While this strategy is implemented, the Council will continue to maintain its contaminated site database and respond to requests for information. It will also continue to follow up previous investigations encouraging site owners and occupiers to take action to mitigate any adverse effects arising from their sites.

#### 4. **Communication**

The Council provides territorial authorities with updated information about contaminated sites in their districts on a quarterly basis. More specific information is provided to territorial authorities and the public as requests are received.

The owners of all sites included in our database are advised that we hold information about their property, and are given the right to inspect and correct any information held.

#### 5. **Recommendation**

*That the report be received and its content noted.*

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