

CON 12-15

Camola Property - Walnut



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Doc #15999

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THOMAS J. VILSACK
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PAUL W. JOHNSON, DIRECTOR

SALLY J. PEDERSON,
LT. GOVERNOR

February 2, 1999

Jeffrey Hunter, President
Hotel Fort Des Moines
1000 Walnut Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309

RE: Environmental Information for Property at 1312-1324 Walnut, Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Mr. Hunter:

Staff of the IDNR Solid Waste Section have reviewed the material which you submitted in January 1999 regarding the property on Walnut Street.

The department receives numerous reports of contamination. Many of these reports originate from environmental assessments conducted for the purpose of property transfer. Because the number of sites exceeds our resources for addressing them, we have a priority system for selecting sites for further action and oversight by the department. We deal only with sites which appear to be the most serious threats to human health. Our first priority is sites where there is an existing or imminent threat of human exposure to levels of contamination in excess of health based guidelines. Our second priority is sites with very high levels of contamination, the probability of large amounts of waste, or the likelihood of an ongoing release of contaminants. We deal with second priority sites as resources are available and seldom with lower priority sites.

The environmental information submitted for your facility included reports for a Phase I Environmental Assessment and a limited Phase II Environmental Assessment.

The Phase I report indicates the property was occupied by two battery manufacturing companies during the 1920s and early 1930s. One of the companies, Diller Battery, subsequently operated at other locations, one of which has significant lead contamination. Diller and another battery company operated at property near Riverview Park Lake from 1946 to 1953. In 1996 this property was found to have surface soil lead contamination as high as 8,660 parts per million (ppm). The current property owners (which include Polk County and the City of Des Moines) have been conducting assessment and remedial activities under oversight by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Phase II field activities were limited to two boring locations on the southeast and southwest corners of the property. An elevated level of lead (190 ppm) was found in the surface sample at one of these locations. This contamination level is less than half of the cleanup level which has been used at residential locations, and by itself is not cause for concern. However, it may be indicative of a release during operation of the battery companies which may have caused much higher levels of contamination on other parts of the property.

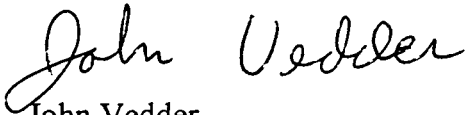
The Phase II report identified tetrachloroethylene (PCE) contaminated groundwater above the state action level as defined in the Chapter 133 rules. At 5.7 ug/L the PCE groundwater contamination is just above the drinking water standard (5 ug/L). However, this contamination is not likely to present a threat to the Des Moines water supply from the Raccoon River because of the interceptor wells at the Dico site.

The Phase II report also identified arsenic in soil above the state standard for incidental soil ingestion of arsenic contaminated soil as defined in the new Chapter 137 rules. However, the values of between 5 and 10 ppm are within the normal background range for arsenic. In the absence of other information, the arsenic levels found in the soil samples are considered representative of background concentrations and are not of concern.

Although we have noted the potential for significant soil contamination with lead, the limited information on site contamination the site does fit the criteria for the first or second priority as outlined above. Therefore the IDNR will require no further action at this time. This judgment is subject to revision if additional information suggests such a change is warranted.

If you have any questions, please call me at 515/242-5087.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Vedder".

John Vedder
Environmental Specialist