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Somerton Tanks Are Getting a Makeover

PHILADELPHIA – The Philadelphia Water Department began necessary maintenance on the Somerton Tanks located in the Somerton section of Northeast Philadelphia, in the spring of 2007. The work will take place over two seasons since it takes four months to complete each tank and painting can only take place during warm weather. The work will take place Monday through Friday, and will end in the fall of 2008. The maintenance includes repainting the inside and the outside of both tanks and some structural repairs.

The Water Department has hired a specialized contractor to remove the existing paint. The process involves a two foot metal enclosure that will be moved along the tanks surface under a vacuum, the dust will be drawn away in the vacuum and disposed of safely. This method ensures that no harmful materials will reach the air. In hard to reach areas, localized containment and sandblasting will be used. In addition the contractors continuously monitor the air quality as an added precaution. The new paint meets all industry standards and is absolutely lead-free.

The color of the Somerton Tanks will change as well. Due to aviation regulations the Tanks were painted in their distinctive checkerboard pattern. These regulations have since changed, and the tanks will be repainted a solid sky blue.

The water supply in the area will not be affected, because while one tank is being painted the other tank will supply the community with water. The maintenance on the tanks has no affect on water quality. If you have any further questions or for further information, please call the Water Department's 24-hour hotline at 215-685-6300.

Trucks will be carrying equipment through the neighborhood on Tomlinson Road during working hours. The equipment will be stored on the Somerton Tanks site during construction. Some vehicles may be parked during the day along the entrance of the Somerton Tanks driveway. Noise may be generated by air compressors necessary to operate high pressure hoses, sand blasting, and spray painting equipment. Should you experience any problems as a result of the work, please ask to speak with the inspector on the job site.

The Somerton Tanks were built in 1958 by Chicago Bridge & Iron Company. The Somerton Tanks are made of steel which offers strength and flexibility. However steel is susceptible to corrosion, making routine maintenance necessary. The tanks were repainted in 1967 and again in 1984 and are in need of a recoating.

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