



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) evaluated the actions taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 4 staff in response to a June 2004 OIG report concerning the Stauffer Chemical Company Superfund site in Tarpon Springs, Florida.

Background

The Tarpon Springs plant was used from 1947 to 1981 to process phosphorous. Even though the plant was removed, contaminated soil and material remained at the 130-acre site. EPA approved leaving these contaminants there, after consolidating and solidifying them, and then installing a cap. In June 2004, the OIG identified actions needed to allay public concerns about the cleanup actions proposed for this site and for other sites with similar geological traits, and to improve citizen involvement in the process.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2008/20080916-08-P-0264.pdf

Corrective Actions Were Generally Implemented at Stauffer Chemical Company Superfund Site, Tarpon Springs, Florida

What We Found

Under a consent decree, the potentially responsible party is preparing the design for the EPA-approved cleanup actions. In December 2007, the design was 30 percent complete. As recommended in OIG Report No. 2004-P-00018, *Review of Actions at Stauffer Chemical Company Superfund Site, Tarpon Springs, Florida*, June 3, 2004 (OIG 2004 Report), this draft design incorporated the information and recommendations from the additional site studies.

Also as recommended in the OIG 2004 Report, Region 4 staff revised the community involvement plan for the site to include some community activity during the design phase. These activities are being performed. For example, public meetings were held in October 2005 and June 2007. In addition, when issuing the May 2007 Explanation of Significant Differences to change the cleanup actions proposed, Region 4 staff complied with EPA requirements. Although EPA could have asked for public input before making this decision, it does not require formal public participation during the remedy design phase.

In November 2004, to comply with a recommendation in the OIG 2004 Report, a Region 4 official instructed the staff to determine whether karst was present at a cleanup site and, if so, whether it would impact the site. Karst, an area of limestone formations that often contains sinkholes, is widespread in Florida. Some citizens believed that sinkholes at the Stauffer Chemical Company Tarpon Springs plant could cause any structures at the Superfund site to settle when the underlying ground sinks, and could create ready pathways for pollutants to travel between the surficial and Floridan aquifers.

We reviewed six sites to determine if recently-started site investigations included work to identify the presence and impact of karst. Although three of the six sites are not in karst-prone areas, three sites are so located. Earlier studies at these three sites had not evaluated the potential impact of karst. More recent studies are addressing the karst issue.

What We Recommend

We have no recommendations for corrective action.