



Hagerstown Light and Heat Site, MD-0194

What You Need to Know

This former manufactured gas plant (MGP) operated in south central Hagerstown, Maryland from 1891 until 1949. MGP residuals have been identified on site, and MDE is working with NiSource, the parent company of the property owner, Columbia Gas of Maryland, to resolve the associated contamination issues.

Site Location

The former Hagerstown American Light and Heat MGP occupied two adjoining parcels, 55 Sycamore Street, and 441 East Potomac Street, comprising just over 8.28 acres. MGP operations occurred on the 55 Sycamore Street parcel (Washington County tax map 0312, Parcel 1995) and the plant's tar disposal pond was located on the 441 E. Potomac Street parcel (Washington County tax map 0313, Parcel 2268). The approximate coordinates for the center of the 0.75-acre tar pond are 39° 38.034' north and 77° 43.451' east. The terrain slopes very gently to the south towards Marsh Run.

Site History

From 1891 to 1949, the company operated a coal gasification plant for the residents of Hagerstown in the vicinity of 55 Sycamore Street in Hagerstown. Prior to the development of an industry to use coal tar in the 1890s, it was customary for small gas plants to dispose of the residual coal tar wastes on or near the site of production. At the Hagerstown site, these residual wastes were disposed of in a former lagoon located on the Cassidy Trucking Co. property located at 441 S. Potomac Street. Hagerstown American Light and Heat terminated operations in 1949 when natural gas was supplied to the residents of Hagerstown. Columbia Gas of Maryland, a subsidiary of NiSource Corporation, purchased the property in 1968 and established an on-site field office. To facilitate remedial efforts of the MGP operation, NiSource purchased the adjacent former Cassidy Trucking Co. property at 441 E. Potomac Street.

Environmental Investigation

The Waste Management Administration conducted a Preliminary Assessment in 1986 to document site conditions and history at that time. NUS Corporation subsequently followed up this investigation with a Site Inspection report in 1991 based on a 1926 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map that identified a tar pond east of the site. This Site Inspection focused on the tar pond located at 441 E. Potomac Street. Results from the 12 surface and subsurface soil samples identified elevated levels of metals and PAHs.

In 1999, MDE completed a Site Survey that revealed no samples had been collected from the MGP's operations portion of the site at 55 Sycamore Street, only from the adjacent property where the tar pond was located.

In December 2002, MDE completed a Site Inspection of the former Hagerstown Light and Heat property at 55 Sycamore Street. Chemical analyses of groundwater and soil samples on site revealed coal tar wastes as free product in the areas of the former gasometers and tar tanks.

In 2003, NiSource began voluntary remediation investigations. The remedial investigation actions to date include:

- 59 soil borings on the MGP operations property
- 31 soil borings on the tar pond property
- 10 test pits to investigate former MGP operations structures
- 20 test pit borings utilizing air knife technology to “soft dig” around utilities
- Installation of 24 overburden and 7 shallow bedrock monitoring wells
- 4 sub-slab soil gas points at the Columbia Gas of Maryland office
- 5 soil vapor points focused near residential properties along E. Potomac St.
- Video survey of a storm water sewer immediately to the east of the tar pond
- 59 soil borings to facilitate TarGost[®] technology to identify areal extent of gross contamination
- Use of Willowstick[®] geophysical technology to identify preferential groundwater flow in bedrock

On November 20, 2018, MDE’s Controlled Hazardous Substances Division approved a Remedial Measures Plan to include a containment remedy for grossly impacted soils, groundwater monitoring and non-aqueous phase liquid (NAPL) recovery, slip line the onsite storm water line, vapor barrier requirement on future buildings, and institutional controls.

Current Status

Groundwater monitoring and NAPL recovery began in August 2019 and is ongoing. Delays in construction permitting continue with implementation of the containment remedy to begin in 2022.