

Continental Cleaners

798 NW 62nd Street

Miami, Florida

County: Miami-Dade

District: Southeast

Site Lead: EPA

Placed on National Priorities List: March 15, 2012

ERIC ID # 3954

Site Description and History

The site is located at 798 NW 62nd Street, in Miami, Miami-Dade County, Florida in Township 53S, Range 41E, Section 14 at 25° 49' 54.9993" N, 80° 12' 36.9829" W. The site is approximately half an acre and includes a back lot enclosed by a fence with locked gates. The principal onsite structure is a single story, 3,361 square foot building built in 1938 with municipal sewer and water service. A reported hazardous waste storage area is located outside at the rear of the building. The surrounding area is mixed residential and commercial properties.

The property was used as a gas station prior to 1968. In 1968, two underground storage tanks located in the northwestern corner of the gas station were abandoned in place by filling with sand and capping with concrete. Laundry and drycleaning operations were conducted at the site from approximately 1968 to 2005. Drycleaning operations shut down in mid-2005 and resumed in mid-2008 under the name Continental Cleaners, LLC. The facility is currently used as a pickup and drop-off location for offsite dry cleaning. The exact date between mid-2008 and the present when drycleaning operations ceased onsite is unknown.

In the 1990s, local environmental officials found dry cleaning chemicals had been released to the ground and ground water. Numerous studies documented tetrachloroethene, a common drycleaning solvent and its breakdown products in the soil and ground water at the site. In May 1996, the facility applied for participation in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Drycleaning Solvent Cleanup Program (DSCP). In January 1997, the facility was determined by the DEP to be ineligible to participate in the DSCP due to the facility's gross operational negligence.

Threat

Previous groundwater and soil investigations have revealed contamination of on-site soils as well as the aquifer on-site. The Biscayne Aquifer beneath the site is the sole source of municipal drinking water for southeast Florida. Contaminated groundwater is a potential health threat to local residents through direct contact and use of private surficial aquifer wells.

A well survey by the Department of Health identified 2 irrigation wells within a 1-mile radius of the site. EPA has provided notice to the owner of the irrigation well located south of the site where PCE was detected above the MCL. In June 2016, written notice of groundwater contamination was also provided to offsite real property owners whose property are within the groundwater contaminant plume. An area potable well survey indicates that there are no potable wells being used by property owners in the area of the plume.

Response Strategy and Status (December 2020)

On August 18, 1993, and February 23, 1994, the Dade Miami County Department of Environmental Resources Management (DERM) inspected the facility and identified evidence of industrial waste discharge (PCE, TCE, and phenols) to the ground and/or groundwater. In August 1993, PCE and phenols were detected at 16,000 µg/L and 16 µg/L, respectively, in a liquid collected from a floor drain at the rear of the facility. In February 1994, a sample of cleaning machine catch basin sludge detected a PCE concentration of 19 µg/kg. The DERM issued a Notice of Violation to the facility on August 4, 1994, for industrial waste discharges to the ground and/or groundwater. Subsequently, on August 24 and 25, 1994, the DERM visited the facility to complete an inspection of the liquid-filled underground drainage structure at the southern end of the facility. On August 25, 1994, the structure was evacuated of its contents, allowing the DERM to complete the inspection. A Contamination Assessment Plan (CAP) was completed and submitted and approved in December 1994. The CAP was not implemented, and industrial facility plans to install berms, seal the floor drain, connect a pipe from the drycleaning machine to a drum, and discontinue discharges to the catch basin were disapproved by the DERM in February 1995.

In October 1995, the DERM inspected the facility and discovered that dry cleaning solvents were again being discharged to the ground, with PCE being detected at 1,604.7 µg/L, and TCE detected at 44 µg/L in a sample of liquid collected from a drain at the rear of the facility. In May 1996, the DERM issued a final notice prior to court action against the facility for failing to comply with the notice of violation, specifically to cease and desist. In July 1997, Miami-Dade County filed a civil complaint in circuit court for failing to cease and desist and failure to submit a CAP/Remedial Action Plan. In November 1998, the DEP conducted a routine facility inspection noting numerous violations. The facility was ordered to cease disposal of mop water to the septic tank. In March 1999, the court issued a temporary injunction, ordering the implementation of a CAP.

In September 2000, the facility was found in contempt of court for failure to comply with the temporary injunction, and was ordered to cease operations. During 2000, the DERM approved disconnection of plumbing to the holding tank and installation of a new connection to the sanitary sewer. The plumbing change was completed in 2001; however, it is unknown if the holding tank was removed. The DEP inspected the facility in August 2001, finding the facility still in operation and citing several violations, including a need to repair leaks and seal the floor. Following a meeting between the DERM and Continental Cleaners in July 2002, the DERM recommended deferral of cleanup responsibilities to the state of Florida. Accordingly, the DEP Southeast District conducted a hazardous waste/DSCP compliance inspection at the facility in February 2003. At the outside rear of the facility, two unlabeled 20-gallon (estimated) drums of PCE sludge and waste dry cleaning filters were identified. Waste disposal records, stored at another location, were not reviewed, and the owner of the facility (subsequently deceased) promised to provide those records.

In July 2005, the DEP inspected the facility and made several recommendations. In December 2005, the DEP submitted a request to Ira Whitehead, Jr., the most recent facility operator and personal representative of the Lillie Mae Whitehead estate, for permission to access the site for sampling purposes.

In February 2006, Safety Kleen removed three drums of toxic liquid and two squat drums of filters. Spotting chemicals were also moved to a 55-gallon open-head drum for secondary containment and drycleaning equipment was checked for leaks. In March 2006, Metcalf & Eddy, Inc. (M&E), on behalf of the DEP Site Investigation Section, conducted on-site sampling. Chlorinated solvents were detected in exceedance of GCTLs at each of three different sampling intervals. The highest detected concentration was PCE at 3,800 µg/L from the 13 to 17 feet below land surface (BLS) sample interval. Following the field screening activities, three monitoring wells were installed on-site and groundwater samples were collected for analyses of volatile organic hydrocarbons. Maximum concentrations detected in the groundwater samples were: PCE (7,130 µg/L); TCE (15,100 µg/L); CIS (25,900 µg/L); and *trans*-1,2-dichloroethene (636 µg/L).

In December 2008, the DEP re-inspected the facility and issued a Notice of Non-Compliance, citing that floor sealant adjacent to the spotting board and in other areas was in poor condition.

In March 2009, the DEP Southeast District recommended the Continental Cleaners site for CERCLA screening. In March 2011, Tetra Tech NUS conducted a Site Investigation Assessment for the DEP. The Site Investigation Assessment concluded a release of chlorinated solvents had occurred at the site and contaminated both soil and groundwater.

In April 2011, the EPA proposed to list Continental Cleaners on the National Priorities List and, in March 2012, the site was placed on the National Priorities List. Phase I of the field investigation was conducted in July 2012. Groundwater concentration data indicate that groundwater contamination is present offsite to the north-northwest in the direction of local groundwater flow. Phase II of the field investigation was performed in January 2013. Phase III of the field investigation was performed in August 2013. Phase IV of the field investigation was performed in July 2014. The extent of the groundwater contaminant plume appears to be vertically and horizontally delineated, based on direct push groundwater data and a limited number of monitoring wells located onsite and offsite. The final Remedial Investigation Report was submitted in December 2014.

Contaminants detected in soil samples include tetrachloroethene (PCE), trichloroethene (TCE), *cis*-1,2-dichloroethene (CIS), chloroform, methyl cyclohexane and toluene. PCE was the only contaminant detected in soil at a concentration (3,600 µg/kg) that exceeded the leaching soil cleanup target level (SCTL). PCE was found at elevated concentrations in the floor drain and in ground water at the site. Soil contamination may exist beneath the building and has been previously documented in soils behind the facility. TCE and CIS were also detected at concentrations two and three times the level of PCE in the groundwater. TCE and CIS are breakdown products of PCE. The groundwater concentrations of these volatile organic compounds significantly exceed State groundwater cleanup target levels (GCTLs) and Federal drinking water standards, particularly onsite and immediately downgradient. The groundwater contaminant plume extends off site to the north, where CIS has degraded to vinyl chloride which is also present in groundwater at levels above GCTLs and drinking water standards.

A draft Feasibility Study (FS) was submitted in May 2015. The FS presented remedial alternatives which could be used to address contaminated soils and groundwater at the site. FS review comments were provided to the EPA Contractor by the EPA, DEP and DERM. A revised final FS was submitted in December 2016, and approved by EPA.

The EPA issued a proposed plan in August 2017, and held a public meeting to present the proposed site remedy to the public for comment. EPA signed the Interim Action Record of Decision (IAROD) April 2018. For soil impacted with COCs exceeding the SCTLs as established in Chapter 62,777, F.A.C. (Florida Administrative Code), the preferred option is demolition of the former facility building, and excavation of all vadose zone soils contaminated above the SCTLs, allowing for unrestricted land use. If sampling verifies soils beneath the building exceed the SCTLs and Owner consent, the building will be demolished to allow excavation in that area. If the current property owner declines to grant USEPA permission to demolish the building the contingent remedy will be put into place. Contingent remedy consists of excavation of accessible vadose zone soils above SCTLs and passive soil venting. Institutional controls (ICs) would be implemented to address contaminated soils remaining onsite and use of an engineering control.

DEP issued a Briefing and Concurrence Memo in February 2019.

Schedule

EPA will begin pilot study treatability work plan in July 2019. A Final ROD will be issued by the EPA in an estimated 6 to 8 years following interim remedy implementation.