



# SUPERFUND COMMUNITY UPDATE

## Port Refinery Site

Rye Brook, New York

May 2005

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### Community Involvement

Public participation is essential to the success of EPA's Superfund program. If you have any questions regarding cleanup activities at the site, please contact Jack Harmon, On-Scene Coordinator, at 908-420-4437, or Cecilia Echols, Community Involvement Coordinator at 212-637-3678 or 1-800-346-5009.

#### Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR)

A representative of ATSDR is available to answer your health-related questions. Please call Arthur Block, ATSDR Senior Regional Representative, at (212) 637-4307.

#### Superfund

For information on the Superfund process, please visit EPA's website at: [www.epa.gov/superfund](http://www.epa.gov/superfund). The site contains information on the various tools and resources available to community groups, as well as fact sheets about other sites.

#### Regional Public Liaison

EPA Region 2 has designated George Zachos the Regional Public Liaison for you to call, should you have concerns or complaints about the Superfund program. Please call (888) 283-7626.

The purpose of this update is to provide information to area residents, local officials and other interested parties on the status of the work conducted at the Port Refinery site (site).

The overall objectives of this cleanup action are to reduce the potential threat to the public health; to immediately mitigate the risk of mercury contamination into the environment and to remove and dispose of the mercury material.

EPA plans to work closely with the local officials and area residents to provide ongoing, timely information about this cleanup.

### Here's the Situation at Port Refinery

On April 30, 2004, at the request of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, EPA conducted an emergency response at the site in the Village of Rye Brook, New York, to remove visible mercury discovered near a rock pile, adjacent to the asphalt walking path on The Arbors condominium property. Elemental mercury and soil contaminated with mercury was loaded into drums and staged at the Village Police Department shed pending future disposal. In May through July 2004, EPA collected a number of surface soil samples from The Arbors in the area of the path in order to delineate the extent of mercury contamination. Upon the recognition that mercury was present in the soil on neighboring properties beyond the area of the spill, EPA expanded its investigation to these neighboring properties. A comprehensive investigation of air, surface and subsurface soil, stream and pond sediment, and groundwater began on September 15, 2004 and was completed on December 17, 2004.

On site observations and analysis of data from the comprehensive investigation revealed that the areas of mercury contamination at the site could pose a health threat through direct contact, incidental ingestion, and/or inhalation of mercury.

### The next steps at Port Refinery

The cleanup began during the week of May 2, 2005 and is estimated to be completed at a minimum of three to four months.

## Here are some highlights of this cleanup:

- Mobilization and site preparation with set-up of a support zone, including establishment of a temporary access roadway and removal of trees;
- Excavation, staging, transportation and disposal of contaminated soil to the appropriate cleanup level of mercury
- Acquisition and demolition of a residential structure on Hillandale Avenue and the temporary relocation of its occupants
- Removal of the source areas of groundwater contamination: former well and septic tank structures on Hillandale Avenue along with their contents, followed by transportation and disposal of mercury;
- Removal and off-site disposal of sediments from three ponds, associated underground piping, and stream channel;
- Pump and treat exposed groundwater during excavation/removal of the well, septic tank, and foundation;
- Restoration of excavated areas and demobilization.

## Mercury

Mercury is a naturally occurring element that is present throughout the environment. Elemental mercury is readily absorbed by the human body through the respiratory tract, skin and the eyes. Mercury poisoning can be cumulative and can take years to recognize. Health problems caused by mercury depend on how much has entered your body, how it entered your body, how long you have been exposed to it, and how your body responds to the mercury. Prolonged exposure to elevated levels of mercury can have adverse impacts on the brain and the nervous system.

As a result, all mercury spills, regardless of quantity, should be treated seriously. If you want more information on the health affects associated with exposure to mercury, contact the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry at 212-637-4307.

## Background

In the early 1990's, the Rye Brook Police Department received complaints about a resident on Hillandale Road mishandling mercury. EPA was asked to investigate this residence and discovered extensive mercury contamination in a garage and cabana and in many areas on the property where the mercury had been illegally dumped. To remove the contamination, EPA demolished the resident's garage and cabana and excavated soils from the property and other surrounding areas where mercury had been deposited. EPA ultimately removed nearly 6,500 tons of soil, sediment and debris contaminated with mercury from a eleven. The cleanup, which cost about \$4 million, was completed in 1994.