GSA Heartland Region

Bannister Federal Complex
Legacy Contamination Clarification

April 2010

Environmental issues associated with the Bannister Federal Complex are best understood when grouped into three periods of time: a pre-regulatory era, a period of transition, and present day.

A pre-regulatory era (1942 to mid-1970s)

During this time, the site was primarily used for manufacturing airplane engines and non-nuclear components for nuclear weapons. It was also used for warehousing, Internal Revenue Service operations, and commercial storage. Ownership and control of the complex was shared between GSA and the Atomic Energy Commission (now the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration), which oversees the Kansas City Plant. The Kansas City Plant is currently operated by Honeywell Federal Manufacturing & Technologies, LLC. Chemicals used in manufacturing and solid waste disposal were not subject to today's standards for managing toxic and hazardous materials in the workplace or environment.

1942: Senator Harry S. Truman breaks ground on the Bannister Federal Complex, which serves as the manufacturing site for Navy aircraft during World War II.

1942 to 1964: The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) operates a landfill to dispose of manufacturing waste, including solvents, metals and petroleum, which leads to contamination of soil and groundwater at the complex.

1943 to 1945: U.S. Navy occupies space at the Bannister Federal Complex.

1945 to 1948: War Assets Administration occupies space at the Bannister Federal Complex.

1947: The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) moves its operations to the complex.

1949: Federal Government leases a large portion of the complex to Westinghouse Electric Corporation for the production of aircraft engines for naval fighter jets used in the Korean conflict. Westinghouse subleases part of its space to Bendix (later Allied Signal) to produce nonnuclear components for nuclear weapons on behalf of the Atomic Energy Commission. Bendix's portion of the complex becomes known as the Kansas City Plant.

1961: Westinghouse discontinues its operation at the plant.

1983: A complex cleanup of the Bannister Federal Complex begins.

1984: RCRA is amended, which gives EPA new responsibilities in regulating hazardous wastes.

A period of transition (early-1970s to 1989)

These years saw the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970) and the Safe Drinking Water Act (1974), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act ((1976) and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, which established the federal Superfund (1980). During this period, the previous use of the site was evaluated and remediation begun.

1970: The EPA is established to protect human health and the environment. The Clean Air Act is passed.

1974: The Safe Drinking Water Act is passed.

1976: Ownership of the Bannister Federal Complex is divided between the Department of Energy (Bendix) and GSA.

The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) is passed to protect human health and the environment from potential hazards of waste disposal, to conserve energy and natural resources, to reduce the amount of waste generated and to ensure that wastes are managed in an environmentally friendly way.

1977: The Department of Energy (DOE) is formed and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) discontinues its operation at the Bannister Federal Complex.

1980: The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) was passed, creating a federal Superfund to locate, investigate and clean up the worst hazardous waste sites in the nation.

1989: EPA Consent Order VII-89-H-0026 is signed, resulting in significant corrective action and cleanup at the Kansas City Plant.

A treatment system is installed to control the movement of contaminated groundwater. The treatment system eliminates 99.7 percent of ground water contamination. (source: http://www.em.doe.gov/bemr/bemrsites/kscp.aspx)

Present Day (Years Since 1989)

Site issues have been continuously addressed through containment and other remediation, including regular monitoring. GSA, relying on the best available science, has been confident that the spaces GSA occupied and leased during these years have not posed human health risks. At the DOE Kansas City Plant, sampling and analysis of soil, groundwater and air quality continue to ensure the effectiveness of remediation activities.

Since 1989, GSA has operated a safety and environmental program that meets regulatory compliance. All structures on the property under GSA control have had health and safety inspections each year. Some of the tests have been in response to specific concerns and other tests have set a baseline to characterize conditions that are continually monitored.

1989 +: Sampling and analysis of soil, groundwater and air quality continues.

2006: The Kansas City Plant completes selection of remedies for all areas of the site and continues to operate and maintain those remedies.

2010: GSA asked the EPA to conduct new tests of air quality in two buildings. Per request from GSA, EPA conducts rigorous air quality tests in two buildings and finds no indications of health concerns related to volatile organic compounds. Additional soil sampling around these two buildings will continue.

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