

3.3: Case Study - Badger Army Ammunition Plant

Badger Army Ammunition Plant (BAAP) Case Study

Case Study for Hazardous Waste



Figure 3.3.1: A scene from the BAAP waste cleanup site <https://dma.wi.gov/DMA/news/2015news/15042>

Environmental cleanup of the 7,400-acre Badger Army Ammunition Plant will be greater than \$250 million. This is one of the 40 contaminated military sites in Wisconsin which the Defense Environmental Restoration Account cites as the most contaminated. In fact, 32 areas are polluted with dangerous levels of solvents, metals and explosive/incendiary waste. The water beneath the plant is contaminated with mutagenic chemicals that include carbon tetrachloride, trichloroethylene and dinitrotoluenes. One part of the site, known as the Propellant Burning Grounds, is the source of a three-mile plume of contaminated groundwater that has migrated offsite, completely contaminating private drinking water wells in addition to the Wisconsin River.

Elevated Cancer Rates

In 1990, the Wisconsin Division of Health conducted a health survey. It concluded that communities near the Badger plant have a significantly higher incidence of cancer and deaths. In spite of these alarming findings, the State refused to take any action. In 1995, the Division of Health responded because of pressure from CSWAB (Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger) and reopened the community health study.

On October 26, 1998, CSWAB concluded “there was entirely inadequate contact with our community – the population being studied.” Prior to September 1998, no press releases were published, no public meetings were held, and no interviews were conducted. Despite several requests, virtually no resources were devoted to interviewing residents about current health problems and concerns regarding their exposure to air, dust, emissions, and surface soils. Assessment of risk from cleanup activities was also absent. CSWAB also determined that the Wisconsin DOH focused on death studies when many health problems and community concerns have been nonlethal, such as respiratory illnesses or reproductive problems.

CSWAB appealed to ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in D.C.) to discuss the lack of adequate community participation in this and similar health assessments across the nation. The Wisconsin Department of Health conducted the assessment under a cooperative agreement with ATSDR.

Cleanup Plans Abandoned

The U.S. Army proposed to abandon and severely reduce cleanup of two priority areas within the plant. The Settling Ponds and Spoils Disposal area — a series of lagoons that run the length of the 7,000-acre facility — is contaminated with high levels of lead and dinitrotoluenes.

Maintenance of the Badger plant costs in excess of \$17 million per year. In 1991, only \$3 million was allocated for environmental studies. Since 1975, there have been over 56 chemical spills and incidents. Moreover, there is no national strategic need for maintaining the Badger plant. A February 20, 1997 Government Accounting Office report concludes BAAP and three other military plants could be eliminated “because alternative sources exist...to provide the capabilities these plants provide.”

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