

Status of Armstrong World Industries Site Cleanup – April 2019

DEQ is working on the investigation and cleanup of historical contamination at the Armstrong World Industries site in St. Helens, Oregon.

Background

The roughly 175-acre Armstrong World Industries property is located at 1645 Railroad Ave., adjacent to Scappoose Bay and about one mile south of St. Helens. The site consists of an approximately 36 acre upland area surrounded by wetlands.

The current owner is Armstrong World Industries. Former owners include:

- Fir-Tex Insulation Board - 1929 to 1938
- Dant and Russell - 1939 to 1956
- Kaiser Gypsum Company - 1956 to 1978
- Owens Corning Fiberglass Corporation - 1978 to 1987

The property has been used for fiberboard manufacturing since 1929. Industrial wastewater from the plant was originally discharged directly into bordering wetlands and Scappoose Bay. A wastewater treatment facility was built in the late 1960s by Kaiser Gypsum to separate solids from the wastewater. After acquiring the property in 1987, Armstrong treated wastewater on-site and either reused it or directed it to the City of St. Helens wastewater treatment plant.



Kaiser Gypsum Company Operations, Circa 1970

Since 2010, DEQ has been working with Armstrong World Industries, Kaiser Gypsum, and Owens Corning to complete a remedial investigation and feasibility study for the upland and lowland/in-water areas of the property.

On May 10, 2018, Armstrong closed the plant, affecting 130 jobs. Armstrong cited changing market conditions as the reason for closure. DEQ is working with economic development stakeholders to determine environmental considerations that may impact future industrial activity at the site.

Threats from site contamination

The primary contaminants of concern for the project are:

- Chlorinated dibenzodioxins (dioxins)
- Chlorinated dibenzofurans (furans)
- Metals, particularly arsenic and mercury
- Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)

Upland contamination poses health threats to site workers and has the potential to migrate to lower lying areas and wetlands.

Contaminants in sediment accumulate in fish, clams and crayfish, posing a health threat to fishers who eat them. Contaminants also pose health threats to fish and wildlife.

Upland cleanup activities

The upland investigation included sampling of soil, groundwater, catch basin solids, feedstock materials and stormwater. The highest contaminant concentrations at the site are found in the area south of the main facility building.

The feasibility study, which presents cleanup options for the upland, was completed in March 2016. In June 2018, DEQ issued its final cleanup plan—or Record of Decision—to address contaminated surface soils in the upland portion of the site.

Cleanup of the upland includes soil excavation and disposal, installation of a gravel and asphalt cap, and institutional controls. The cleanup is estimated to cost \$1.4 million. Removal and disposal of contaminated hot spots was completed in fall 2018. Capping is scheduled to be completed in 2019.

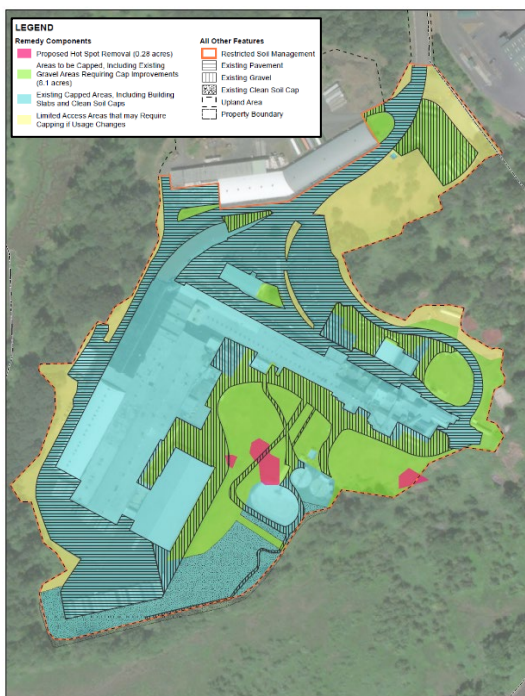


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Upland Cleanup Plan – Hot Spot Excavation and Capping

Lowland cleanup activities

The lowland/in-water investigation included sampling of soil, sediment, and aquatic organisms including bass, carp, crayfish and clams. The highest contaminant concentrations in the lowland are found closest to the upland/lowland boundary where process wastewater was discharged directly from the facility until the late 1960s.

Additional information and studies are needed to develop cleanup options for the lowland.

Kaiser Gypsum filed for bankruptcy in September 2016, delaying work in the lowland/in-water area. DEQ will resume work in the lowland as soon as the bankruptcy is resolved, anticipated in mid to late 2019.

For more information

Visit DEQ’s Environmental Cleanup Site Information database at <http://bit.ly/ECSI91>

Or contact:

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Alternative formats

DEQ can provide documents in an alternate format or in a language other than English upon request. Call DEQ at 800-452-4011 or email deqinfo@deq.state.or.us.