

Safety Teams Ready for Detrick Cleanup

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Frederick County emergency personnel met with officials at Fort Detrick on Wednesday afternoon to discuss plans that will be enacted in the event an emergency occurs during the post's cleanup of Area B-11.

Scheduled to start next month, the cleanup will be the first of a few U.S. Army efforts to contain groundwater contamination under the site long-used as a landfill for laboratory waste.

Area B-11 is located one block east of Kemp Lane.

The primary culprits that have appeared in the post's monitoring wells and a few off-site private wells since 1991 are chemical solvents known as tetrachloroethene (PCE) and trichloroethene (TCE). The chemicals are most commonly used as dry-cleaning agents and degreasers and are suspected to cause cancer.

Kirk Ticknor, project manager with the Army-contracted IT Corp., said his firm expects it will also unearth unknown chemicals that will be kept onsite until they can be identified and, ultimately, disposed of properly.

Mr. Ticknor, along with other IT Corp. professionals and Army officials, went over the cleanup plans with emergency personnel as well, taking feedback regarding emergency access and other concerns.

Representatives from the Maryland State Police at Frederick, the Frederick Police Department, the Frederick County Sheriff's Office, Frederick County Fire and Rescue and Central Alarm made each other aware of their own responsibilities if an emergency situation arises.

Several safety measures will be taken by IT Corp. to contain air contamination expected after digging begins. Mr. Ticknor said mobilization and setup at the site will begin as early as the end of January through early February. Backhoes will begin to dig test trenches to find the contaminated sites at three points only after a steel building complete with air filtration systems is built.

After the contaminated areas have been found, a freezing system that entails pipework to pump chilled saltwater will be placed underneath the areas in order to freeze the soil beneath the contaminants. This is done to ensure further leeching will not occur if containers are broken while digging is taking place.

The freeze walls are scheduled to be installed about May and most of the actual digging and removal work will be done about July. Waste will eventually be transported to facilities in Pennsylvania or New Jersey for incineration, Mr. Ticknor explained.

Preliminary work onsite will include building a gravel road across Area B to minimize truck traffic on residential streets when the removal begins. The most discussed route for the waste as of Wednesday is off post at Montevue Lane, then onto Rosemont Avenue and U.S. 15. That plan, however, has not been finalized.

Residents will be kept up to date as far as contacts are concerned to report a possible emergency.