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Anacortes Seeks Safe Strategy for Demolition of Old Water Treatment Plant

Pre-demolition assessments find PCBs in material and soil samples at old facility

Experts conclude water is safe, no threat to public health

ANACORTES, WASH.—Today the City of Anacortes submitted a Remedial Investigation Report to the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) requesting assistance in the development of a safe strategy for site remediation and building demolition at its former water treatment plant. The former water treatment plant was decommissioned and replaced with the current, state-of-the-art water treatment facility in 2013.

Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), along with minimal levels of arsenic and lead, were found in building materials and soil at the old water treatment plant exceeding regulatory limits during a hazardous materials assessment and site characterizations that were conducted in 2015 and 2016.

“Our water is safe and there is no threat to public health,” said City of Anacortes Public Works Director Fred Buckenmeyer. Since the 1970s, the City has regularly tested for organic materials and periodically tested for inorganic materials, including PCBs. Testing results have always met or exceeded the water quality standards of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act.

Excerpts from the toxicological evaluation of the site submitted to DOE state:

“In summary, based on the results of this health Risk Assessment, no adverse health effects are likely to have occurred to customers, workers or trespassers at the former Anacortes WTP from exposure to PCBs or other chemicals present in building materials.”

“None of the samples of drinking water contained detectable concentrations of PCBs, and therefore, there is no risk to users of the City’s regional water system.”

“Because chemicals, (primarily PCBs) detected in concrete, paint, and coating materials are tightly bound within the structure of the materials, and were only detectable by forcible removal of samples (e.g., by drilling sample cores, scrapping of coating or cutting or scrapping off sealants and cork) followed by crushing the samples to enable the chemicals to be extracted using solvents, no pathways of exposure of persons at the Site to chemicals in these materials were assumed to have existed. This includes lead and arsenic, which were detected infrequently but at concentrations that were either below cleanup levels or below naturally occurring background levels...”

According to Buckenmeyer, “the next step will be to work with DOE to develop a strategy to safely cleanup the former water treatment facility, then implement it, but no timeline has been established as of yet.”

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