



INFORMATIONAL FLYER

**Sterling Dry Cleaners
(So's Dry Cleaners (former))
304 W. Wisconsin Ave.
Appleton, WI**

September 2010

History

The property at 304 West Wisconsin Avenue in Appleton has been used by dry cleaning businesses since approximately 1955. Sterling Enterprises, LLC, took title to the property on June 18, 1999. Before that, it was operated by **So's Dry Cleaners**. In December 2007, Mr. Jae Cho became President of Sterling Enterprises, LLC and continued the dry cleaning operation.

In July 2008, Mr. Cho contacted the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in regard to an approaching sunset date for entry into the Dry Cleaner Environmental Response Program (DERP). DERP is a program for the investigation and cleanup of contaminants released to the environment from dry cleaner operations. It is funded by and utilized by licensed dry cleaners and managed by the DNR.

In order to be accepted into DERP, Mr. Cho needed to determine whether or not contamination existed on the property. In the process of reviewing historical records and interviewing persons formerly involved with the property, the DNR became aware of environmental data from 1998. The 1998 data, which was not previously provided to the DNR, showed that soil and groundwater on the property are heavily contaminated with dry cleaner chemicals.

In August 2008, Mr. Cho applied for and was accepted into DERP. Mr. Cho began the required bidding process to obtain an environmental consultant to perform an investigation of the contamination. While Mr. Cho worked with the DNR to select an environmental consultant and submit an approved workplan, Mr. Cho was not able to obtain funding to perform the investigation. Mr. Cho remains legally responsible for the contamination.

Time Line for State and Federal Responses

- July 2009 – The DNR filed an affidavit to the deed to notify potential purchasers of the known environmental contamination. The DNR considered the case for investigation using Environmental Fund (EF) monies. However, due to a reduced EF monies, increased workload and revelation of the 1998 data, the DNR decided to request assistance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and state and local health officials in evaluating the risk to human health and the environment at this location.
- January 2010 - The DNR formally requested assistance from USEPA. USEPA assigned an On Scene Coordinator (OSC) to work with the technical team of the DNR project manager, WI Department of Health Services (DHS) toxicologist and local Appleton Health Officer and Environmental Health Supervisor.

- March 2010 – USEPA sampled the soil, groundwater and air on the property and at two residences immediately adjacent to the dry cleaner. USEPA confirmed significant environmental contamination remains on the property in soil and groundwater and conclusively determined that the vapors from the contamination are impacting the indoor air at one private residence.
As a result of the March 2010 study, the DNR again requested USEPA's assistance – this time for expanding the environmental study within the neighborhood, removal of the contaminated soils and installation of a sub-slab depressurization system (SSDS) at the impacted residence(s). (The SSDS diverts the impacted air around the residence, rather than through it, similar to a radon mitigation system.)
- August 2010 – USEPA sampled the soil, groundwater and air at private residences throughout the surrounding neighborhood, in the rights-of-way and in Superior Street. The results of that expanded study are pending.

Throughout this process, the USEPA is evaluating current and former owners and operators of the property to determine their obligations associated with this contamination, including their ability to reimburse USEPA for the study and cleanup costs. USEPA's team of legal and enforcement staff are working simultaneously with the technical team to resolve the environmental issues stemming from this property.

Cleanup

The USEPA plans to begin excavating the contaminated soils the week of September 20, 2010 and installing the SSDS at the impacted residence(s) the week of September 27, 2010. These dates may be amended to accommodate weather or other conflicts.

Plans for the Future

Once the USEPA finalizes evaluating the environmental risk to human health and addressing confirmed risk, the DNR will resume considering the case for additional investigation and potentially additional clean up as funding and workload allow. The DNR intends to request EF monies for monitoring the groundwater in the area over time and defining the complete extent of the contamination in soil and groundwater. If warranted, the DNR may take additional cleanup actions. The DNR will continue to work with DHS and the Appleton Health Department.

For More Information

You may direct questions about the Sterling Dry Cleaners site to DNR project manager:

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Check out the DNR tracking system on the internet at <http://botw.dnr.state.wi.us/botw/SetUpBasicSearchForm.do>. Enter 0245552133 in the "Activity Number" box.