



At a Glance

Catalyst for Improving the Environment

Why We Did This Review

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) is testing long-term monitoring results at Superfund sites the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has deleted from the National Priorities List to ensure that EPA has valid, reliable, and accurate data on the conditions at these sites. Delatte Metals Superfund Site (Delatte), Ponchatoula, Louisiana, is one of eight sites that we are evaluating.

Background

Soil and water at Delatte were contaminated with metals from battery recycling and smelting operations. EPA deleted Delatte from the National Priorities List in 2005, signifying clean-up goals were achieved through remedial action. In November 2007, EPA Region 6 completed a required review (Five-Year Review) of the Site to determine if it still protected humans and the environment from unacceptable risks.

For further information, contact our Office of Congressional and Public Liaison at (202) 566-2391.

To view the full report, click on the following link:
www.epa.gov/oig/reports/2009/20081119-09-P-0029.pdf

EPA's Safety Determination for Delatte Metals Superfund Site Was Unsupported

What We Found

EPA's protection determination for the Delatte Metals Superfund Site was not supported by its data. Despite evidence of potential remedy failure, EPA Region 6 determined in November 2007 that conditions at Delatte protect humans and the environment in the short-term. Our review showed:

- The permeable reactive barrier (PRB) was not treating all of the shallow contaminated groundwater before it discharges to surface water and migration of metal contaminants was uncontrolled.
- Metal concentrations in surface water greatly exceeded site clean-up standards.
- Site access was uncontrolled and public warning that the Site is restricted to industrial use was limited.
- Region 6 did not perform sufficient testing of the groundwater and surface water to determine whether contaminants were controlled.
- Region 6 did not perform the required inspection of the PRB.

EPA research scientists also raised concerns about the effectiveness of the PRB in controlling the migration of all metals and recommended that Region 6 conduct additional testing. The data available to Region 6 when it conducted its November 2007 Five-Year Review, combined with the OIG's results, show that the Site's safety cannot be determined until the effectiveness of the PRB and the risk posed by the migration of metals are assessed.

What We Recommend

We made eight final recommendations to Region 6. The Region agreed with seven OIG recommendations to ensure that the Delatte clean-up remedy is performing as intended and is protective to human health and the environment. Region 6 disagreed with our recommendation to amend its 2007 Five-Year Review determination to state that the protectiveness of the Delatte remedy cannot be determined without further information and analysis. We believe this action is needed. The recommendation is open and unresolved.