



Former Manufactured Gas Plants Marina District and Fisherman's Wharf Area, San Francisco

Fact Sheet

Introduction

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) has prepared this fact sheet to provide a brief introductory overview regarding its voluntary program to conduct an environmental survey related to former manufactured gas plants or MGPs. Some of these plants operated in San Francisco's Marina District and Fisherman's Wharf area, in some cases, more than a century ago. This ongoing program, which started in the 1980s, has been conducted with regulatory oversight from the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). For more information, please visit www.pge.com/mgp.

Background

In the mid 1800s and early 1900s, before natural gas was available as an energy source, more than 1,500 manufactured gas plants were located in cities and towns across the country. Gas manufacturing in the City of San Francisco originated in the Gold Rush era, in the early 1850s, when the City was the key urban and financial center for the U.S. western territories. Manufactured gas plants were facilities that used coal and oil to produce gas for lighting, heating and cooking. At that time, this technology was a major step forward, revolutionizing street lighting, enhancing public safety and enabling businesses to work into the night.



View of the Marina District and former Fillmore and North Beach MGPs, circa 1896.

In addition to gas, MGPs produced a variety of byproducts, some of which were useful and marketable, such as coal tar and lampblack. The byproducts that could not be sold were removed for disposal or remained at the MGP site.

With the arrival of natural gas in the 1930s, most of the manufactured gas plant sites in California were no longer needed and were closed.

History of Marina MGPs

Beginning in 1883, the Fillmore manufactured gas plant operated in what is now known as the Marina District in San Francisco, near the area west of Fillmore and Bay streets. Beginning in 1891, the North Beach manufactured gas plant operated in the Marina District, near the area north of Bay and Buchanan streets. PG&E was formed in October 1905, and operated the gas plants for six months until April 1906, when they were destroyed in the Great Earthquake. The quake also destroyed most other buildings in the area.

It is probable that any materials left from plant operations are underground where direct contact has been unlikely, for three reasons:

- Due to how plant waste disposal was handled on site
- The filling and grading that took place after the earthquake
- The grading and filling that took place following the burning and subsequent demolition of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition

A separate gas plant operated in the Fisherman's Wharf area near the intersection of Beach and Powell streets until the 1930s.

PG&E Manufactured Gas Plant Program

In the 1980s, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conducted research that identified around 1,500 former manufactured gas plants around the country. The research found that, in some cases, residues from these facilities may remain onsite.

Following the EPA study, PG&E, along with other utility companies across the country, established a program to identify the location of MGP sites and began a process of testing water supplies and soil samples from sites in the service area.

According to toxicologists and health experts, exposure to MGP residues is not common because, in most cases, they are located below the ground surface.

As part of our commitment to environmental responsibility, PG&E wants to ensure that any potential impacts to the environment from former MGPs are addressed in accordance with today's regulatory standards. Of the 41 manufactured gas plant sites historically owned or operated by PG&E through the 1950s, 33 have been or are in the process of being remediated. The remaining are being initiated in 2010, including those in the San Francisco area.

Past Efforts

In the Marina District in the 1980s, working under the oversight of the appropriate State and Federal environmental protection agencies, we informed property owners in the area of the historical uses of these sites and offered to conduct soil sampling. We performed testing on properties where owners consented and shared results with the owners, agencies and regulators. No further work was requested by the DTSC because the data collected indicated that these sites did not pose a health concern. The other agencies, likewise, did not request further work. In the 1990s, we tested two additional properties at the request of the owners and shared the test results with them. We worked with one of these owners to remove soil from a portion of their property – no further work was requested by the owner. This work was completed under the oversight of the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The other owner was satisfied with the test results and made no request for further work. Based on the 1980s and 1990s testing and an extensive review of medical literature by toxicologists and medical experts of MGP sites across the country, there is no indication that these sites pose any health concerns to the public.

Present Efforts

Starting in 2010, we are conducting a voluntary program in San Francisco, with the DTSC, to sample for residues that may be present at the sites of the former Marina District and Fisherman's Wharf area manufactured gas plants. If the DTSC determines that remediation

activities are necessary, we'll work closely with that agency, residents and City health and environmental departments to design the most effective remediation program for the sites.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is PG&E doing in the Marina District?

We are conducting a voluntary program under the oversight of the DTSC, using today's technology, to test for residues that may be present at the sites of former manufactured gas plant locations. Two of these sites are located in the Marina District of San Francisco.

Should I be concerned for my family's health?

Toxicological and medical experts we have consulted conclude there isn't any evidence of exposure or health concerns based on the testing we did in the 1980s and 1990s and their extensive review of medical literature. DTSC toxicologists agree.

If no health impacts to the public exist, why are you testing now?

Using today's technology, we are doing this work to re-confirm the findings of the 1980s. The DTSC agrees with and supports our decision to voluntarily move forward with this effort.

How will the program work?

PG&E will work with local property owners to arrange to survey and collect samples from their properties. Samples collected will be sent to a California-certified laboratory for analysis. PG&E will work under the oversight of the DTSC to determine next steps following a review of the sample results. Sample results and next steps will be shared with property owners and regulatory agencies.

How long is this going to take?

The average time spent on the sampling of each property will be 3-4 work days. Sampling of all residences will take about one year. Depending on whether remediation work is required, it could take anywhere from a few months per property to 5 years or more for the entire program.

How will this work affect me?

Our goal is to minimize disruptions to people who live or work in the area. All local residents and property owners have been invited to an open house to learn more about the work we plan and the steps we're taking to minimize inconveniences and protect public safety during this work.

For More Information

If you would like more information about our program, including contact information for project representatives at the CalEPA, DTSC, please call us at **415-973-0270** or email us at **marinresource@pge.com**.

You also can visit **www.pge.com/mgp** or visit us in person at our neighborhood office:

1593 North Point Street, San Francisco
Monday – Friday – 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Saturday – 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. through March
(Please see website for Saturday hours after March)