



Former Manufactured Gas Plant EKA-1 Eureka, California

Informational Sheet

Introduction

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) is issuing this informational sheet to provide a brief overview and introduction to its voluntary remediation program and planned cleanup of a former manufactured gas plant (or MGP) that operated more than a century ago in the City of Eureka. Since the inception of PG&E's Environmental Remediation Program in the 1980s, ongoing work has been conducted with regulatory oversight from the California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) and the California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). 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 Eureka originated in the early 1870s, 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 toward the north of the Eureka-1 Manufactured Gas Plant (left, with gas holder) and Steam Electric Plant (right, with smoke stack); circa 1948

In addition to gas, MGPs produced a variety of byproducts, some of which were useful and marketable, such as lampblack, which is a common pigment used in paints. 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 Eureka MGPs

Humboldt Gas and Electric constructed the Eureka-1 Manufactured Gas Plant (EKA-1) in 1907 and operated it until 1910, when Western States Gas and Electric took over the company. Pacific Gas and Electric acquired Western States Gas and Electric's properties, including EKA-1, in 1927. The MGP was expanded over the years until the City of Eureka's conversion to natural gas in 1941. After this, the Eureka plant was on standby status until 1950, when a propane plant was installed. Most of the oil-gas generating facilities were dismantled in 1954, and the remainder of the old works was removed in the 1960s. Two above-ground structures and several historic underground features, such as concrete utility vaults, footings, and pipelines, remain on the property.

PG&E Manufactured Gas Plant Program

In the 1980s, the United States Environmental Protection Agency conducted research that identified approximately 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 and that none of the chemicals present at former MGP sites pose a significant health risk.

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 manufacturing gas-plant sites historically owned or operated by PG&E through the 1950s, all of them have been or are in the process of being remediated.

Past Efforts

The Eureka-1 MGP site is comprised of two primary parcels, the eastern and western parcels.

During the former MGP operations, the eastern parcel was primarily used as a storage facility for hydrocarbon fuels for the MGP. The eastern parcel is currently owned by PG&E, and is used as a maintenance yard. After MGP operations at the site were retired, PG&E used this parcel to compress propane in large steel tanks, and this parcel is often referred to as "the propane plant."

During MGP operations, the western parcel is where the gas was manufactured. It is no longer owned by PG&E and is currently leased by Sierra Pacific Lumber for timber and wood chip loading operations.

Between 1986 and 2001, PG&E worked closely with the RWQCB to develop and implement a final remedial action on the eastern MGP parcel. PG&E also worked with the City of Eureka in 1989-1990 to remove sections of an oil pipeline from city streets that were associated with the MGP.

PG&E has implemented several phases of investigation work on the western MGP parcel, beginning in 2003 and continuing through today.

Present Efforts

Starting in 2010, PG&E began the third and most significant phase of site investigation efforts. This work is nearly complete, and PG&E is currently developing remedial strategies in consultation with the RWQCB. PG&E will present an evaluation of remedial alternatives and will solicit feedback from the community and other stakeholders during an open comment period in 2012. Following the open comment period, a remedial design will be developed that will outline the scope and schedule for the cleanup work.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

We welcome your comments and questions. Please call us at 1-866-247-0581.