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(New York, N.Y.) More than 200 million gallons of flood water has been drained from the American Cyanamid Superfund site in Bridgewater, NJ and the system used to capture contaminated ground water under the site is now functioning, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today. Ground water under the site is highly contaminated with metals and VOCs, such as benzene and xylene from the former manufacturing activities. EPA continues to oversee the assessment, cleanup and repair work at the site and previously scheduled cleanup work is resuming.

“The devastating flooding caused by Hurricane Irene posed a major challenge at this Superfund site, but we are now back on track,” said Judith A. Enck, EPA Regional Administrator. “The system to pump contaminated ground water to a nearby treatment facility is now up and running and we are keeping the contamination from spreading.”

The ground water system is now pumping about 475 gallons per minute to the Somerset Raritan Valley Sewage Authority. The system pumps this water from the ground and conveys it to the sewage authority where it is treated and discharged into the Raritan River.

EPA is also overseeing the restoration of and improvements to the berms surrounding two large chemical waste impoundments that were over-topped by flood waters from the Raritan River. The work will be completed this week.

Work to install a system to prevent contamination from seeping from the two waste impoundments into the Raritan River, Cuckholds Brook and Middle Brook has resumed. EPA estimates that the impoundments contain nearly 900,000 tons of waste material, consisting mainly of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), semi-VOCs and metals. The sludge and soil in the impoundments contains metals, cyanide, and VOCs. EPA will oversee the installation of a ground water capture system along the Raritan River and Cuckholds Brook designed to capture and prevent ground water from seeping into the water bodies. The work is expected to be completed in the spring of 2012.

EPA is also evaluating options for cleaning up a major portion of the site and expects to release a proposed cleanup plan this winter. A separate study to determine options for addressing the contamination from the two large chemical waste impoundments is expected to be completed in late 2012 or early 2013. EPA will evaluate this study and will subsequently develop a proposed cleanup plan for the impoundments.

The American Cyanamid Superfund site is located in Bridgewater Township in Somerset County. The site currently encompasses approximately 435 acres south of the New Jersey Transit commuter rail line and adjacent to the Raritan River. Between 1915 and 1999, the site was used for various chemical manufacturing operations. Numerous surface impoundments were used to store by-products of the chemical production, dye production and coal tar distillation processes that took place on the site.
The American Cyanamid Superfund site was badly flooded as a result of Hurricane Irene, putting virtually the entire site underwater and leaving more than 200 million gallons of flood waters that had to be pumped from the site. The flood waters damaged some of the berms and other structures on the site and crippled the ground water treatment system.

For more information about the site, visit the website at: http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/npl/american_cyanamid/ [1].

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