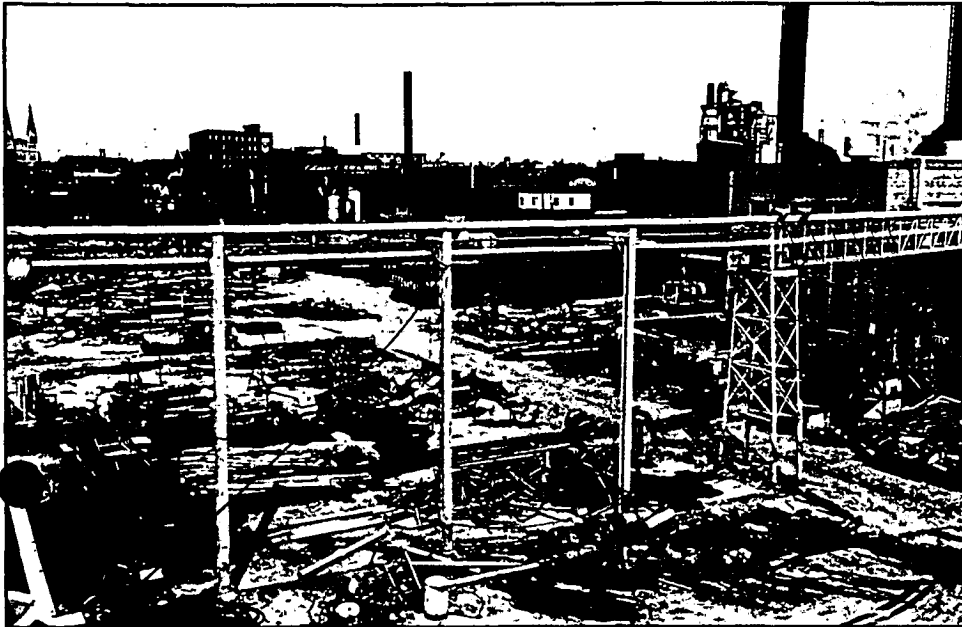


BACKGROUND

This is the first in a series of background articles on the St. Louis FUSRAP sites. This summarizes the history of the contamination on the sites.

St. Louis contamination begins with atomic age



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Uranium processing for government nuclear projects began during World War II at this site in downtown St. Louis.

The four sites in St. Louis that are slated for cleanup under the Department of Energy's Formerly Utilized Sites Remedial Action Program (FUSRAP) were contaminated as a result of activities conducted in the 1940s and 50s as part of the nation's defense program.

In those early years, most uranium, the principal source of nuclear fuel, was extracted from foreign ores. Uranium is an element that occurs naturally, usually in combination with other elements. In its raw form, uranium ore cannot be used as a fuel. The uranium must be separated from all other elements, and the part that is used as fuel, called fissionable uranium, must be concentrated.

Much of the government-sponsored research and development in the 1940s was conducted at national laboratories and universities, with commercial firms producing

the needed raw and finished material.

One of these commercial firms was the Mallinckrodt Chemical Works that had already been operating in downtown St. Louis for more than 50 years.

MCW processes uranium

From 1942 to 1957, the Manhattan Engineer District/Atomic Energy Commission contracted with Mallinckrodt to perform several operations, including processing and producing various forms of uranium compounds and pure uranium metal. As a result of these activities, materials, equipment, buildings, and parts of the property became contaminated with naturally occurring radioactive materials.

At completion of the MED/AEC operations, the facilities were cleaned up and decontaminated according to the standards and survey methods in effect at the time. However, later radiological surveys showed that portions of the facility retain levels of radioactivity in excess of current, more stringent, federal guidelines.

DOE to clean up

The Department of Energy, which is the successor agency of the AEC, has taken the lead for cleanup of contamination that occurred as a result of government operations on that site and on the other sites that became contaminated as a result of transporting and storing the contaminated materials from the downtown site.

The portion of the Mallinckrodt property included in DOE's cleanup operation is referred to as the St. Louis Downtown Site. Six vicinity

properties also exhibit residual areas of contamination.

Residues taken to North County

In 1946, the MED acquired a 21-acre site just north of the St. Louis Airport for storage of residues from uranium processing conducted at SLDS. Residue from uranium processing and from cleanup of buildings at the plant was taken to the St. Louis Airport Site for storage. The property was fenced to prevent public access.

No permanent buildings or facilities remain at SLAPS. They were demolished and buried on site under 1-3 feet of clean material in 1969.

SLAPS is sometimes mentioned as a possible permanent disposal cell location for the St. Louis sites. This is because Congress directed DOE to acquire SLAPS for this purpose in the 1985 Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act. However, under the comprehensive process required by federal law prior to cleanup and disposal, DOE is directed to consider other options in addition to the directions of Congress.

Residues reach Latty Ave.

In 1966, Continental Mining and Milling of Chicago, Illinois, purchased process residues at SLAPS for its commercial value and hauled it in trucks about one-half mile to a site on Latty Avenue, just north of the airport site. These residues contained valuable metals in addition to the uranium.

As a result of hauling practices that would not be allowed today, some of these residues blew off the trucks and randomly contaminated vicinity properties such as highway rights-of-way and portions of private properties along the haul routes. Continental stored the residues at the Latty Avenue properties during 1966-67. A successor firm, Commercial Discount Corporation, dried and shipped the material to a new owner, the Cotter Corporation in Colorado.

Later, Cotter purchased the remaining materials at Latty Avenue and continued shipments to their property in Colorado.

Surveys and a renovation were

conducted at the Latty Avenue properties in the late 1970s. The contaminated soil and debris from these decontamination efforts are currently stored at the portion of the Latty Avenue properties called the Hazelwood Interim Storage Site (HISS). The piles at HISS also contain material from a cleanup along Latty Avenue, some of which was in support of a storm sewer installation.

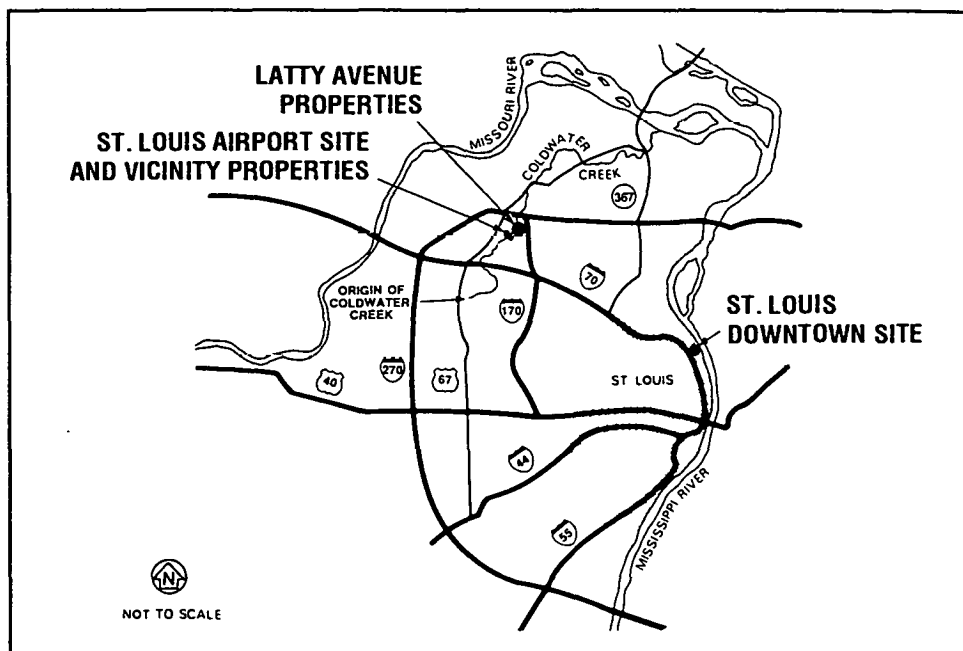
The primary radioactive contaminant on the St. Louis sites is thorium-230. Analyses have also identified the presence of uranium-238 and radium-226. Given present land use, the low-level radioactivity found on these properties poses no immediate threat to public health or the environment. However, performing remedial action and

measures will be preceded by a complete environmental review process as required by CERCLA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

In 1990, DOE and EPA signed an agreement that outlines the environmental review process, referred to as the remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS), that leads to a decision on cleanup alternatives on the St. Louis sites.

DOE is well into the RI/FS process and anticipates release of the draft Feasibility Study-Environmental Impact Statement and the Proposed Plan in early 1994.

Selection of a final cleanup strategy will not be made until after public review of the RI/FS and the record of decision, which is cur-



Locations of FUSRAP properties in the St. Louis, Missouri, area.

achieving cleanup standards will ensure that the contamination poses no significant risk if land use changes in the future.

Cleanup process underway

In October 1989, the Environmental Protection Agency placed SLAPS and the Latty Avenue properties on the National Priorities List. This action requires cleanup to proceed under the authority of EPA and the guidelines of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Comprehensive cleanup

is currently scheduled for mid-1995. DOE will design and begin the cleanup after a record of decision has been reached.

The RI/FS process is lengthy, but it assures that when a decision is made on cleanup for the St. Louis sites that it will have been reached after consideration of all aspects of environmental, public health, and safety concerns.