



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 1
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BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02114-2023

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NAVSTA NEWPORT RI
5090 3a

January 16, 2001

James Shafer, Remedial Project Manager
U.S. Department of the Navy
Naval Facilities Engineering Command
Northern Division
10 Industrial Highway
Code 1823, Mail Stop 82
Lester, PA 19113-2090

Re: Review of the Response to Comments for the Draft Final Remedial Investigation for the Old Fire Fighting Training Area at the Naval Station Newport in Newport, Rhode Island

Dear Mr. Shafer:

EPA reviewed the Response to Comments on the *Draft Final Remedial Investigation for the Old Fire Fighting Training Area, dated October 2000* for technical sufficiency, applicable regulations, EPA guidance, and generally accepted practice. Although many of the responses to EPA comments were appropriate and adequate, I am concerned that there are still some significant issues that have not been adequately addressed. The numbering system used in the Response to Comments was retained.

Comment No. Comments on Response

5. The only chemicals discussed in the uncertainty section are those chemicals which were retained as COPCs and given the NTX designation. There are several chemicals (metals) which were not retained as COPCs with the rationale that they were not retained due a lack of toxicity values. These chemicals should also be retained as COPCs and evaluated qualitatively in the uncertainty section of the risk assessment. In addition, delta-BHC is retained as COPC (NTX) in subsurface soil (Table 6-2.2), but not included in the uncertainty section discussion. Please include a discussion on this chemical as well.
6. The Navy Interim Final Policy was not developed in accordance with EPA Region 1 guidance (EPA, August 1995) regarding the elimination of COPCs based on background comparison. Moreover, EPA has not endorsed use of the procedures outlined in this policy for the OFFTA site.

Sections 1.1 (b), 2.6, and 6.1 of the Federal Facilities Agreement require that remedial investigations under CERCLA are conducted in accordance with EPA regulations, policy, and guidance. Therefore, chemicals should not be eliminated from the risk assessment based on background comparisons during the COPC

selection process. These chemicals should be quantitatively evaluated in the risk assessment and comparisons to background should be performed in the risk management process.

EPA guidance clearly states the COPC list is to be developed based primarily on comparison to risk-based standards (RBCs or PRGs). Risk estimates are to be calculated for all COPCs. In the risk management stage of the RI, statistical comparison to sound background data may be used to determine if risk drivers are present owing to background conditions. At this point, risk managers may agree to exclude a risk driver from the COC in the Record of Decision if the risk driver is clearly present owing to background conditions.

It is particularly important to evaluate the arsenic data closely because naturally occurring arsenic can become more bioavailable in the presence of petroleum products. (As you know, oil and gasoline were reportedly used onsite to ignite structures for fire training purposes.) I recommend that the RI focus its efforts on the risk characterization. In an effort to reach resolution, the RI should provide a quantitative estimate of the risk that is associated with the background chemicals (I note, however, that a background value for arsenic is still under negotiation with RIDEM). This approach would allow evaluation of whether any of these "background" contaminants should, in fact, be considered Chemicals of Concern in subsequent decisions, and it would provide clear information about risks from all exposures to communicate to the community and other stakeholders. I understand that this is an approach that Navy headquarters supports. As you know EPA's national guidance on this issue will be issued shortly and will be consistent with the Region I Risk Update (EPA, August 1995).

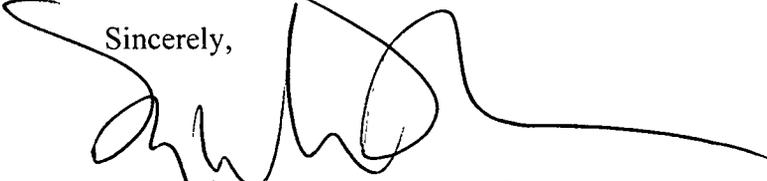
Specific Comments

<u>Comment No.</u>	<u>Comments on Response</u>
22. Tables 6-2.1 & 6-2.2	See Specific Comment 28.
28. Table Q-19, App. Q	The responses to Specific Comments 22 and 28 indicate that the Navy intends to use background data that contain all non-detected results in the comparison of site specific data to background. For example, selenium, silver and sodium in the surface soil background data set and selenium and sodium in the subsurface soil background data set had no positively detected values. However, as shown on Tables P-18 (surface soil) and Q-19 (subsurface soil), background comparisons were performed for these analytes in these media. This procedure is not acceptable to EPA and is not consistent with procedures used by the Navy at other sites in Region 1.

The first step in the background comparison process is to reject from consideration any constituent where the frequency of detection in the background data set does not exceed 0%. To maintain consistency in the statistical approach to background evaluation used by the Navy at facilities in Region 1, a similar decision tree step should be incorporated into the background comparison process for OFFTA. Although it is possible to generate statistics for background data sets with zero detected values by using surrogate values for non-detected results, it is not a conservative approach to suggest that site data for constituents with positively detected values could be comparable to background concentrations where no positively detected results were obtained. Comparisons of site data to background data using background data sets where the frequency of detection does not exceed 0% will not be accepted by EPA and should be removed from this RI report.

I look forward to working with you and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management toward the cleanup of the Old Fire Fighter Training Area. Please do not hesitate to contact me at (617) 918-1385 should you have any questions or wish to arrange a meeting.

Sincerely,



Kimberlee Keckler, Remedial Project Manager
Federal Facilities Superfund Section

Attachment

cc: Paul Kulpa, RIDEM, Providence, RI
Melissa Griffin, NETC, Newport, RI
Mary Sanderson, USEPA, Boston, MA
David Peterson, USEPA, Boston, MA
Jennifer Stump, Gannet Fleming, Harrisburg, PA
Mary Philcox, URI, Portsmouth, RI
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