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5-7-2007

TOXIC SITES DOT CITY'S WATERFRONT

Taxpayers likely to be stuck with part of cleanup from Allied plants

BY TOM PELTON
[SUN REPORTER]

Arsenic-laced Swann Park is one of several places along Baltimore's waterfront where carcinogenic wastes from long-closed Allied Chemical Co. plants are reappearing like ghosts from the city's industrial past.

Officials at the Maryland Department of the Environment say they are pushing Allied's successor company, New Jersey-based Honeywell International, to clean up or contain pollution left by Allied's pesticide factory in South Baltimore and chrome plant in Fells Point. Chrome waste and other chemicals taint not only the vacant plant sites, but also dumping grounds in Dundalk, Fairfield, Locust Point and near North Point in Baltimore County.

The cost of the toxic legacy could run into the hundreds of

millions of dollars, and state and city taxpayers will likely be stuck with a portion of the tab — although how much is not clear, state and company officials said. Some community activists complain that the state isn't moving aggressively enough to make Honeywell pay for the mess.

The state recently asked Honeywell, which assumed responsibility for Allied when the companies merged in 1999, to go back and dig through archives, said Horacio Tablada, the MDE's director of waste management. State officials want to make sure there aren't any other ugly surprises like the one that forced the city to suddenly close Swann Park last month because of high arsenic levels in the soil.

"The question is, are there other areas that we don't know about?" Tablada said. "We are asking the company for more information, to have them go

[Please see POLLUTION, 5A]

Chemical plants leave toxic legacy

POLLUTION [From Page 1A]

back into their old files to see if there are other areas where [waste] was taken."

Honeywell is negotiating with MDE over the containment or cleanup of waste beneath the state-owned Dundalk Marine Terminal, in the city's Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant and in the city-owned Swann Park. Activists want the pollution removed, not capped or buried, and not just in these three places but everywhere Allied left its waste.

Baltimore closed Swann Park, a popular spot for school teams and sports leagues along the Patapsco River's Middle Branch, after Honeywell turned over 31-year-old records showing high arsenic levels in the park. Follow-up tests showed 2,200 parts per million arsenic in the dirt, more than 100 times safe levels. Federal health investigators are studying whether there was any risk to children who played ball at the park or to neighbors.

A spokeswoman for Honeywell, which makes aerospace technology and alarm systems, among other products, said the company is cooperating with the state and city to contain the pollution.

"Chrome ore processing residue was used as fill material in certain areas around the Baltimore area during the 1940s until the early 1970s," Honeywell spokeswoman Victoria Streitfeld said in an e-mail. "At the time, such disposal was a common and accepted practice in Maryland and elsewhere."

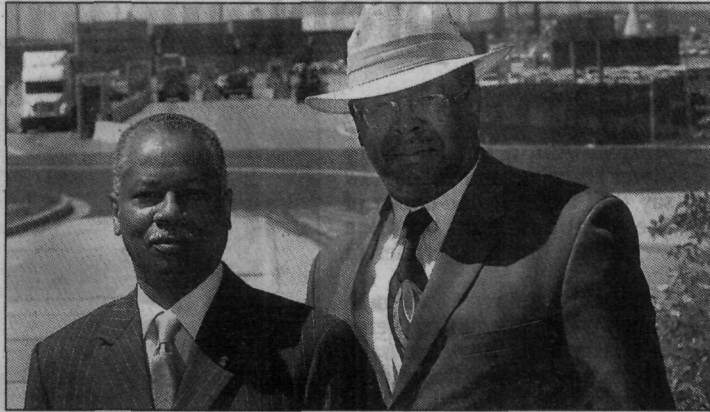
A Honeywell predecessor, AlliedSignal, paid \$100 million during the 1990s to build a cap over chromium waste buried at the former chrome factory in Fells Point, which is now the planned site of an office, retail and parking complex.

AlliedSignal ran the factory, which produced compounds that made car bumpers sparkle, until 1985. A second Allied plant next to Swann Park churned out pesticides, including DDT, kepone and lead arsenate, until 1976.

During the city's industrial zenith in the mid-20th century, Allied dumped tons of chrome waste and other pollutants in more than a dozen locations around Baltimore's harbor, both into the Patapsco River and along the shore, according to state records. Chrome waste was often used as landfill under buildings and parking lots.

Chrome waste often contains a cancer-causing agent, hexavalent chromium, which can be dangerous when it becomes airborne. Arsenic dust can also cause cancer when inhaled. But both chemicals are generally not considered hazardous when they're underground or buried in silt at the bottom of rivers or the harbor, health experts say. Digging up chromium or arsenic can sometimes stir up dust and create more health hazards than leaving it underground.

In numerous construction proj-



Harold L. Knight (left), pastor of New Shiloh Baptist Church of Turners Station, and Bishop Douglas I. Miles, pastor of Koinonia Baptist Church and co-chair of BUILD, are pushing for Honeywell to clean up chrome waste beneath the Dundalk Marine Terminal.

KIM HAIRSTON [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

ects around the city's waterfront — including the Harbor East project at 1400 Lancaster St. and the Whitman, Requardt building at 801 S. Caroline St. — backhoes ripping into the ground over the years have uncovered the telltale neon-yellow streaks of chrome waste.

The lemon hue lurks under the parking lot of the Baltimore Museum of Industry on Key Highway in the city. In Baltimore County, chrome waste was used to build a road beside North Point State Park.

Bishop Douglas I. Miles, pastor of Koinonia Baptist Church and co-chair of a community group called Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development, said the state should force Honeywell to remove — not just bury — all of the potentially dangerous pollution. "The company has both the technology and the scientific know-how to clean up all of their sites here in Maryland," said Miles, whose group is being represented by attorney Peter G. Angelos.

The group filed a lawsuit challenging an agreement MDE signed with Honeywell last year that gives the company up to 17 years to clean up or contain the chrome waste leaking from under the Dundalk Marine Terminal. The agreement requires state taxpayers to pay 23 percent of the cost, which could exceed \$100 million.

The suit, pending in federal court, is part of an effort by BUILD to force Honeywell to remove all of its hazardous waste from the Baltimore area. An associated community group in New Jersey recently succeeded in forcing Honeywell to pay for 100 percent of a \$400 million project to dig up and remove chrome waste from a waterfront industrial site in the state.

One difference is the New Jersey property was privately owned, while the Dundalk chrome waste site is owned by Maryland, which might have known about the dumping. "A lot of this is not black and white; a lot of this is shared responsibility," said state Attorney General Douglas F. Gansler. "Each individual site has to be treated and looked at differently."

At the Dundalk Marine Termi-

Across the river at the city's Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant, the state told Honeywell to submit a plan for cleaning up chrome waste used as landfill decades ago, Tablada said.

Bulldozers are scheduled to start digging into the tainted ground next year as part of a major expansion. The city is planning a \$240 million project — funded in part through the state's new "flush tax" — to improve the plant's nitrogen pollution filtration systems, said Sam Grant, a city engineer.

"We're trying to minimize the amount of excavation to minimize the disturbing of the chrome-contaminated soil," Grant said. "We have some hot spots on the site."

At the city-owned site of the former Allied pesticide plant on Race Street in South Baltimore, an asphalt cap built over the polluted industrial property more than 20 years ago has been leaking, state records show.

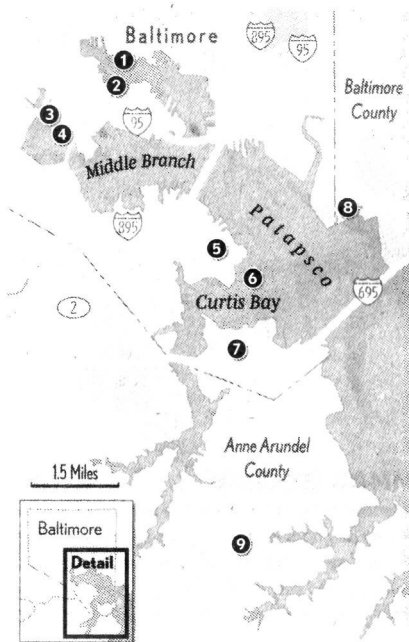
In the 1960s, as much as 450 tons of chrome waste per day for weeks at a time were dumped by plant workers into Middle Branch, MDE records show. Tests by the state in 1976 found high levels of arsenic and kepone in river sediments.

The soil of Swann Park also had high levels of arsenic. An "arsenic shed" stood a few dozen feet from the park's softball and football

FROM THE COVER

POLLUTION AROUND THE HARBOR

Waste from former Allied Chemical chrome and pesticide factories remains at several locations around the Baltimore harbor, including:



- 1 Chrome waste capped under former Allied chrome factory site in Fells Point
- 2 Chrome waste under parking lot of Baltimore Museum of Industry
- 3 Chrome and pesticide waste in Middle Branch alongside former Allied pesticide factory site
- 4 Arsenic in Swann Park from pesticide factory
- 5 Chrome waste under city's Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plant
- 6 Chrome waste on bottom of Patapsco River
- 7 Chrome waste at Hawkins Point landfill
- 8 Chrome waste under state's Dundalk Marine Terminal
- 9 Chrome waste at Solley Road landfill

CHRISTINE FELLEZ [SUN CARTOGRAPHER]

fields, where Southern High School often practiced. On April 24, the state ordered the city and Honeywell to come up with a plan within 30 days to clean up or bury the high levels of arsenic in Swann Park, Tablada said.

Dr. Genevieve Matanoski, a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, said the

arsenic in the soil of Swann Park should be removed because children play in it. A cap won't be enough, she said. "If you want to use the park again as a park, you are going to have to clean it up," she said. "You want to get rid of it now permanently."

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