



Maryland Department of the
Environment

FACTS ABOUT: INDUSTRIAL METAL MELTING SMELTER SITE 43

Site Description

For an undocumented period in the mid 1900s Industrial Metal Melting (IMM) operated a small lead smelter at 108 E. Barney Street in the Federal Hill/Locust Point area of Baltimore City, Maryland. Following closure, the site was used to house antique automobiles for a short period and then converted to a storage building for an adjacent bar/restaurant. The two story brick building sits on the northwest corner of the intersection of Westphal Place and Barney Street. The building has recently been rehabilitated and continues to be used by the adjacent restaurant.

The IMM (Site 43) was a 1100 square foot structure located on the north side of Barney Street, west of Westphal Place. Transfers of the property combined the 108 address with an adjacent structure and re-designated the property as 110 E. Barney Street. That address was subsequently combined with several adjacent properties into the 1741 Light Street property.

The geographic coordinates are latitude 39.2696990° north and longitude 076.6110863° west based on NAD83 data collected from the Baltimore East 1:24000 quadrangle map. The Maryland grid coordinates are north 523,200 feet and east 909,990 feet. The property is zoned commercial and is currently owned by 1741 Light Street LLC. The site is referenced on the Maryland Department of Assessments and Taxation map as Section 6, Block 1024, Lot 019 in Baltimore City.

Site History

IMM occupied a square brick structure located on the northwest corner of Barney Street and Westphal Place. The two story brick structure was originally a stable. The smelting company acquired the property from Mary J. Mentis in 1941 on a ninety-nine year lease. IMM operated its metal melting operation for approximately 30 years. In 1971 IMM transferred the lease on the property to Richard C. Keith.

Property records indicate that the building was merged with other parcels in 1970 and is part of the property identified by SDAT as 1741 Light Street. The IMM structure is now a storage building for Bills Lighthouse Inn.



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Waste Description

Lead smelting involved the melting of lead and the removal of contaminants from the liquid lead mixture. Metals commonly associated with lead smelting include lead, antimony, arsenic, tin, copper and silver. The smelting process discharges metallic waste into the atmosphere. This metallic waste cools and settles out of the air rapidly impacting surrounding soil.

Environmental Investigations

EPA contractors visited the site in January 2006 and noted that the site was in a predominantly residential area with “numerous residential properties in the immediate vicinity that had exposed soil in their yards.” The contractor also noted that there was an elementary school two blocks north of the site and a public park three blocks east of the site. They recommended that soil be sampled in nearby residential yards to determine if a health threat existed. There are no records of this sampling being completed.

The source of contamination was airborne. A model of air dispersion for lead particulates indicated that the contaminant would drop out within several hundred feet of the smelters stack. On October 16, 2012, MDE collected fifteen surface soil samples from the area surrounding the historic site of Industrial Metal Melting. Samples were collected from a quarter mile radius of the site to determine if there are harmful levels of lead or other metals associated with the smelting operation. The samples were analyzed at an EPA CLP laboratory for total metals content. Results of the analysis were compared to EPA regional screening levels and MDE soil clean-up standards.

Current Status

The soils in the general vicinity of the IMM Site contain levels of arsenic, lead and other metals that are generally in keeping with the anticipated concentrations of metals in Maryland soils. The average lead levels in soils surrounding IMM was 162.36 mg/kg. The median level was 103 mg/kg. The lead levels ranged from a minimum of 23.7 mg/kg at S-1 southwest of the smelter to a maximum of 472 mg/kg along the railroad track at the end of Race Street. IMM may have contributed lead contamination to the environment of South Baltimore but that contamination is not available to casual contact. Lead levels in soil within a quarter mile radius of the site are in general below actionable levels.

