



Action Summary

U.S. Ecology, Detroit Michigan

Background

In April 2019, a decision will be made on whether U.S. Ecology Michigan, Inc. (USE) will be relicensed by the State of Michigan and authorized to continue and expand operations of their hazardous waste treatment, storage, and disposal facility (TSDF) located at 6520 Georgia Street in Detroit, Michigan. As detailed below, the proposed hazardous waste management facility renewal and expansion operating license (License) would increase USE's hazardous waste treatment and storage capacity. It would also increase the footprint of the facility. However, the License would not increase the amount of liquid hazardous waste USE can treat per day, or the amount of wastewater that would be discharged to the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), formerly the Detroit Water and Sewage Department, sanitary sewer.

Regulatory oversight of the facility is conducted by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the GLWA. USE is required to comply with state and federal hazardous waste regulations for the management of hazardous waste. The MDEQ hazardous waste and solid waste programs, as well as the Air Quality Division (AQD), inspect USE at least five times each year to ensure compliance with the state's regulations.

Facility Operations

The USE site has been an industrial facility since the 1940's and waste management activities have been conducted at this site since at least 1974. The USE facility was grandfathered with a Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 license to continue hazardous waste operations in the 1980's. USE is presently licensed to sort, consolidate, and store compatible hazardous and non-hazardous waste materials in containers; rinse empty containers and send them for off-site recycling or disposal; and treat (reduce the hazardous nature) incoming hazardous and non-hazardous waste. The currently effective license authorizes USE to treat up to 144,000 gallons of liquid hazardous waste per day in the wastewater treatment facility. Under the License, there would be no increase in the amount of liquid hazardous waste USE is allowed to treat per day, nor the amount of wastewater discharged to the sanitary sewer.

Under the License, the container storage capacity would increase from 41,000 gallons to 488,621 gallons, and USE would be authorized to increase their solid hazardous waste treatment operations to 600 tons per day. They would also be allowed to expand operations from two buildings to five buildings. In total, the License would allow storage of up to 500,739 gallons of hazardous waste in the container storage facility and up to 176,200 gallons in the treatment facility. No waste would be permitted to remain in storage permanently at the facility. The treated wastewater would be discharged to the GLWA sanitary sewer after treatment and all treated, solidified waste would be disposed off-site at an appropriately licensed off-site disposal facility.

At USE, all liquid hazardous waste treated in the TSDF are stored and processed in above-ground tanks. The tanks are monitored to detect leaks and have secondary containment. The waste is sent through a primary and secondary treatment process that neutralizes the hazardous waste and removes hazardous substances. It is then dewatered in a filter press, where the solids are sent to a licensed off-site disposal facility. The wastewater is treated to remove contaminants and discharged to the sanitary sewer, as permitted by the GLWA.

At USE, all solid hazardous waste is treated in vaults. Treatment consists of solidification and stabilization of the hazardous waste with lime and cement. The treated waste is then sent to a licensed off-site disposal

facility. The air exhaust from this hazardous waste treatment process is treated to remove contaminants using a baghouse filtration control device, permitted by the AQD.

USE also has a solid waste license which authorizes the processing and solidification of non-hazardous industrial waste sludge at this facility. The USE license for solid waste processing is not part of this action, but is regulated by the MDEQ under Part 115, Solid Waste, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 Act 451, as amended, and its administrative rules.

What else can you tell me about hazardous waste facilities in Michigan?

The MDEQ issues operating licenses for the management of hazardous waste in accordance with state and federal law. If the proposed facility meets the requirements of the hazardous waste regulations, the MDEQ is obligated by law to issue the license. While the MDEQ must issue a license to a compliant facility, the MDEQ has some discretion in developing license conditions to add safety measures for the community. Where hazardous waste facilities coexist with residential communities, the MDEQ strives to use that discretion to minimize the impact the facility will have on the quality of life of the residents in the neighboring communities.

The USE facility is one of fourteen hazardous waste TSDFs across Michigan. These TSDFs provide treatment, storage, and disposal options to commercial, industrial, and municipal hazardous waste generators. There are approximately 22,500 hazardous waste generators in the Wayne County area. USE is one of seven operating TSDFs in the Wayne County area. The vicinity map depicting the hazardous waste generators and hazardous waste TSDFs in the greater Wayne County area can be viewed at:

<http://www.michigan.gov/usecologydetroitnorth>.

What hazardous waste laws and regulations apply to this facility?

The hazardous waste laws and supporting regulations provide prescriptive standards for the treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste. The hazardous waste regulations that identify the standards that must be met in any license action taken by the MDEQ include:

- Part 111, Hazardous Waste Management, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended, and its administrative rules.
- The corresponding federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976, as amended by the Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments of 1984, and its rules.

What opportunities were provided for public comment?

The relicensing of this facility and the expansion of USE's waste storage and treatment capacity has generated significant public interest and comment. The MDEQ respects the comments of concerned community members and has already made several modifications to the License based on comments received from the community. The MDEQ delayed reissuance of this License to respond to comments and to allow for additional discussions to occur between the MDEQ, the community, community representatives, USE, and the city of Detroit. The hazardous waste regulations require public notice in a local newspaper, a radio announcement in the local area, mailings to local government officials and a list of interested parties, and a public hearing. These, and additional activities, were conducted as follows for the License renewal and expansion:

- In 2007, the MDEQ received a renewal application from Dynecol (former owner of USE). The MDEQ sent a letter to the facility mailing list and government officials (local and state) notifying them of receipt of the Dynecol hazardous waste license renewal application.
- In 2012, USE purchased Dynecol and revised the renewal application to include an expansion request. As part of the request, Dynecol (now USE) conducted a public meeting to present the proposed expansion request to interested members of the public and government officials.
- From 2012 through 2015, the application was under review by the MDEQ.
- On July 15, 2015, the MDEQ public noticed the intent to issue the License renewal approving the expansion. The MDEQ sent letters to the facility mailing list and government officials (local and state)

notifying them of the intent to re-issue the License, solicit comments concerning the License, and invited interested parties to attend a public meeting accepting formal public comment for the record on August 18, 2015.

- To ensure the local community had an opportunity to provide comment on the decision to re-license USE, the MDEQ expanded the public participation by mailing approximately 4,000 postcards to the residents living within a one-mile radius of USE. The postcards informed residents of the MDEQ's intent to issue the License renewal and expansion; provided details on how to provide public comment; and identified when and where they could attend a public meeting accepting formal public comment for the record .
- On August 18, 2015, a public meeting accepting formal public comment for the record was held in the Hamtramck Public Library.
- Additional meetings and updates were provided to local organizations and interested parties upon request, including a meeting arranged by Detroit City Council member Scott Benson. The public comment period was extended to October 12, 2015.
- The application went under further review by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and the MDEQ from 2015 through 2018, specifically for waste analysis plan modifications.
- In July 2018, the MDEQ received multiple petitions stating the MDEQ took inadequate action in ensuring language and national barriers did not exclude the Yemeni and Bengali communities from having meaningful involvement.
- On February 22, 2019, in response to these petitions, the MDEQ informed residents of the MDEQ's intent to issue a License renewal and expansion, and to reopen the public comment period. The notice, provided in English, Arabic, and Bengali, included details on how to provide public comment; and identified how to attend an open house and public meeting on March 28, 2019, to learn more about the License and provide formal comment to be recorded into the public record.

Property Area



How was the public comment addressed in the license action?

Extensive public comment was received during and after close of the first formal, extended public comment period. Changes were made to the License in response to the public comments received, which include:

- Adding truck traffic control requirements.
- Changing the groundwater monitoring waiver conditions.
- Updating the waste analysis plan to address U.S. EPA guidance.
- Developing a compliance scorecard that is readily accessible to the public.
- Establishing a licensing action document repository in the Knapp Branch of the Detroit Public Library.

A responsiveness summary detailing all the comments and the MDEQ response will be issued in April 2019. Some of the previous comments could not be addressed under this hazardous waste licensing action because the MDEQ does not possess the legal authority to require such action. These include:

- Prohibiting the management of technically enhanced naturally occurring radioactive materials.
- Revoking the facility siting approval.
- Requiring the applicant to demonstrate a need for the facility.

How is this facility regulated under environmental regulations?

The facility is subject to multiple environmental regulatory programs, carried out by multiple government agencies. These agencies are: MDEQ, Waste Management and Radiological Protection Division; Wayne County; the City of Detroit; MDEQ, AQD; and the GLWA. Each agency issues separate permits or licenses under the authority they are assigned under the regulations. The permit or license issued by each agency

identifies what USE must do to operate properly, to prevent the release of contaminants to the environment, and to limit any allowed discharge of contaminants to levels determined to be protective of human health and the environment. Each agency requires monitoring and performs independent oversight to ensure the facility is operated in a protective manner that meets the permits and license requirements. The agencies also share information to ensure compliance.

Although the U.S. EPA does not permit or license USE, they may also conduct inspections of the facility to verify compliance with air, water, and waste regulations.

Where can I find more information or get help?

- For questions about inspection reviews and findings, contact the MDEQ, Southeast Michigan District Office, at 586-753-3700. Ask for the inspector that handles the US Ecology North facility on Georgia Street.
- For questions about the technical details of the effective license requirements or the License renewal and expansion action, contact Mr. Richard Conforti at 517-284-6558 or confortir@michigan.gov.
- For more details on the facility licensing, the environmental report card, and more, please visit www.michigan.gov/usecologydetroitnorth. The MDEQ will maintain this web page with the current operating permit and scorecard for USE.

What can you do to help the MDEQ?

You are the eyes and ears of your community. Through your observations and reporting of activities of concern, you provide a valuable role in protecting human health and the environment. To file a complaint or an observation about improper handling or disposal of waste involving USE, contact the MDEQ through the [Pollution Emergency Alerting System \(PEAS\) hotline](#) at 800-292-4706.