



# The Como-tion TCE Update

## A Letter from the SECIA Board to Como Neighbors

Last November, letters were sent to over 200 property owners announcing a potential health concern identified in Como. Trichloroethylene (TCE) vapors from contaminated groundwater may be seeping into properties south and east of the old General Mills facility located at 2010 E. Hennepin. While many knew this facility was a superfund site – one of many polluted sites on the east side - what was not known was that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) had begun to recognize TCE vapors as a concern.

Every household in Como may be affected by this issue to some degree even if not located in the identified area. Some will wonder about their family's safety, others will wonder about their own health issues. Property values could be affected and potential tenants may feel nervous renting in Como. For those who have received letters, the concerns will be even more immediate, especially in the early stages when there are more questions than answers.

How an individual or household responds will be intensely personal. Each will have to decide for themselves what they need to do based on their family's makeup, individual health concerns, and personal resources. Not everyone will agree on choices made, but we should all agree to respect these difficult decisions.

How SECIA will respond is defined by our guidelines as a neighborhood organization and publically funded 501(c)3. We will focus on providing access to information, maintaining a website, bringing in resources, and working with other agencies. We are working with the University student organizations that have already expressed their support and are developing plans based on shared expectations for what it will take to restore a healthy Como community.

Elements of those shared expectations are coalescing around five clear projects that need to occur. While there will be many details within each area, the five major projects that must occur as fast as possible are: Reduce Risk, Research, Remediation, Reparation, and Review. Contained in this newsletter is the initial outline of this plan. Agreement to move forward on this plan was approved at SECIA's February's board meeting.

This is a major issue affecting our community. We cannot frame this as someone else's problem; these are our neighbors and our friends. We cannot change the past; we can only learn from it. What we can do is move forward by; defining a shared vision for the best path forward, seeking the best outcomes and working towards the best future for the entire Como community. We are a community of great people who have accomplished great things. This is a challenge we can overcome together.

Sincerely,

Wendy Menken, SECIA President  
 SECIA Board - Jeff Haberer, Lee Hibbard \*, Stewart Smith \*, Alpa Goswami, Tedd Johnson \*, Phil Roban, Bill Dane \*, Joan Menken, Chris Christopherson, Andrew Ply  
 \* those who are currently in the defined affected area

### Como Resources:

- \$5000 deferred payment loans for home buyers. Check [www.mncee.org](http://www.mncee.org)

- Stay informed with Como Tidbits:



- "Until life's composition be recured, By those swift messengers returned from thee, Who even but now come back again assured, Of thy fair health, recounting it to me"

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### Southeast Como Improvement Association

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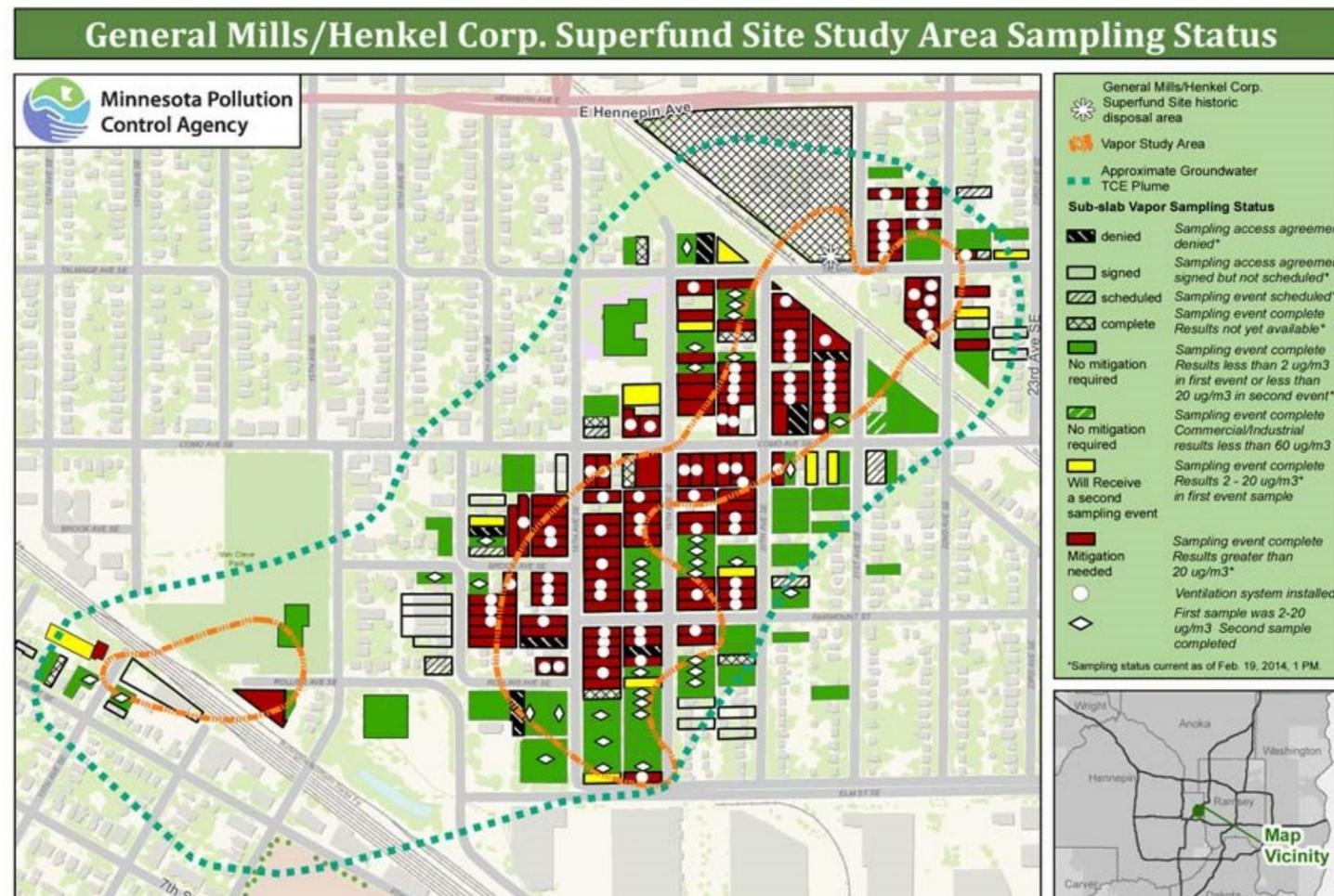


[Secomo.org](http://Secomo.org)

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 Twin Cities MN

## Important information regarding TCE vapor intrusion enclosed

Neighborhood based advocacy benefiting Southeast Como and the entire Twin Cities





## SECIA's Position Related to the TCE Vapor Intrusion Issue in Como

### Revision Date: February 2014

In November 2013, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) notified residents of a potential health concern in the Como neighborhood of Minneapolis. The presence of Trichloroethylene (TCE) vapor, stemming from the General Mills superfund site, has been identified in samples in Como. As testing helps better define the initial scope and affected area and our understanding continues to grow, it is clear that a plan is needed to address the immediate risks while working towards a positive future for the entire Como community.

The Southeast Como Improvement Association (SECIA) is developing a work plan designed to clarify our expectations of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), General Mills Inc. (GMI), the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County and others involved. Upon review of current information and listening to the Como community, it is clear that there are five distinct projects that need to occur:

- I Risk Reduction:** Remove any immediate risks to Como residents and businesses.
- II Research:** Identify the full scope of the problem and build expertise on all aspects of this issue.
- III Remediation:** Implement full remediation using the latest knowledge and technology.
- IV Reparation:** Repair the harm to individuals, businesses and the community.
- V Review:** Evaluate work completed and implement ongoing monitoring and follow-up.

Each major project will have many actions that need to occur; therefore this plan will be fluid as information changes. Projects do not need to occur in order, and, in fact, each project should occur concurrently and as fast as possible. This plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by the SECIA board. The following represents the current plan as of the revision date listed.

- I Reduce Risk:** Remove any immediate risks to Como residents and businesses. *Already underway, this project is the immediate priority. We expect neighbors to be given all the information they need to understand the safety concerns and their mitigation options.*
  - Identify the preliminary area of concern by mapping the extent of the possible vapor intrusion.
  - All test results will be tracked and information provided back to residents, property owners and the community as appropriate.
  - Information and documentation will be provided as requested and the MPCA, MDH and GMI will be responsive to questions.
  - Mitigations will be put in place to remove immediate risks.
  - Mitigation systems will not be disruptive to the livability of the property.
  - Indoor air sampling will be offered to all property owners.
- II Research:** Identify the full scope of the problem and build expertise on all aspects of this issue. *Como neighbors expect a thorough investigation of all factors surrounding TCE vapor intrusion. We want other communities to benefit from our experience through research that furthers collective understanding of the chemical, geological and political factors impacting our community.*
  - Confirm outer boundary of vapor and groundwater plume.
  - Test for a full spectrum of compounds.
  - Test over time to confirm plumes are stationary.
  - Create a correlation study/model between groundwater and soil vapor contamination.
  - Retest 2010 E. Hennepin for other possible dump sites.
- III Remediation:** Implement full remediation using the latest knowledge and technology. *Newer techniques have been developed that better address chemical groundwater contamination. We expect a thorough review of all possible options and a plan to implement those with the best possible outcomes. As with all Superfund sites, we expect the community to be informed and consulted on any decision regarding remediation.*
  - Present remediation methodology to community and planned timeline.
  - Start immediately.
- IV Reparation:** Repair the harm to individuals, businesses and the community. *This project can best be completed once the full scope of damage done to individuals, businesses, the community and the local environment can be assessed. Reparations will include, but are not limited to: repair/compensation of housing value, maintenance of mitigation systems, covering all individual and community expenses related to TCE, repair of the moral and reputation of the neighborhood and repair of the local environment. We fully expect there will be individual recourse as well as what SECIA will lobby for on behalf of the community.*
- V Review:** Evaluate work completed and implement ongoing monitoring and follow-up. *Continued monitoring is essential to review that the work undertaken was effective and ensure the the safety of Como neighbors. It also creates learning opportunities for student researchers and professionals, creating positive outcomes from a difficult situation.*
  - Ongoing testing in a subset of properties to monitor plume size, shape and strength.
  - Continue water monitoring wells.
  - Regular reporting by MPCA to the community that also includes any notable updates about ALL other nearby Como pollution sites.
  - Mitigation system efficiency reviews at 1, 3 and 5 years.
  - Installation of a supplemental ambient air sampling system in the Como neighborhood.



## Students show their concern and support

Since the MPCA first announced the discovery of TCE vapor in samples throughout Como, the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) passed a resolution encouraging landlords to allow testing and, if necessary, mitigation of their properties. Below is a copy of the MSA Resolution.



### Minnesota Student Association Resolution R03-1113 Created: 12 November 2013

**Authors:** Jerod Greenisen, City Council/University District Alliance Rep Claire Karsting, Facilities, Housing, and Transit Committee Member Samantha Marlow, Facilities, Housing, and Transit Committee Member Mike Schmit, Undergraduate Student Body President  
**Co-Authors:** Facilities, Housing, and Transit Committee

**Concerning:** The investigation regarding the presence of Trichloroethylene (TCE) vapor in the Como neighborhood of Minneapolis and the potential risk to students in the areas indicated by the Pollution Control Agency.

**WHEREAS** Recent findings by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency show that dangerous levels of TCE vapors may be seeping into the basements of residences in the Como neighborhood of Minneapolis<sup>1</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** More than 75% of residences in the Como neighborhood are rental properties, many of which house University of Minnesota students<sup>2</sup>; and

**WHEREAS** The inhalation of TCE for extended periods has been linked with several types of cancer as well as nerve, kidney, immunological, and liver damage<sup>3</sup>; and

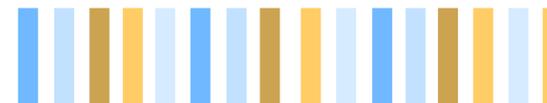
**WHEREAS** Many University of Minnesota students may be receiving unhealthy levels of exposure to TCE; and

**WHEREAS** Testing for TCE in rental properties may only take place with the written permission of the property landlord<sup>4</sup>; therefore be it

**RESOLVED** That the Minnesota Student Association encourages the City of Minneapolis to work with landlords to ensure that all residential rental properties located in the testing zone are tested and deemed to be safe living environments for tenants.

1 <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/waste/waste-and-cleanup/cleanup/superfund/investigation-into-tce-soil-vapor-in-the-como-neighborhood-of-minneapolis.html>  
 2 [http://www.mncompass.org/\\_pdfs/neighborhood-profiles/Minneapolis-Como-102011.pdf](http://www.mncompass.org/_pdfs/neighborhood-profiles/Minneapolis-Como-102011.pdf)  
 3 <http://www.epa.gov/airtoxics/hlthef/tri-ethy.html>  
 4 <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/index.php/view-document.html?gid=20194>

Adding to our support, the U of M's Student and Community Relations connected us with the U of M-Twin Cities chapter of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG) which has committed to spreading information and awareness of our situation and advocate with University and government officials.



## Events

All meetings held at Van Cleve Park, 901 15th Avenue SE.  
Go to <http://tinyurl.com/secocomo-calendar> for more details.

- Community Building Committee Meeting**  
March 11, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Housing and Livability Committee Meeting**  
May 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- General Mills Vapor Study Office Hours**  
March 25, 4:00-6:00 p.m.

- Environment Committee Meeting**  
March 25, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
- Como Blueprint Public Meeting**  
March 27, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
- SECIA Board Meeting**  
April 1, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

