

# DOWNTOWN WELLS WHITE CLEANERS SUPERFUND SITE

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN



May 2024

The goal of this Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is to encourage and facilitate community engagement throughout the Downtown Wells White Cleaners Superfund Site cleanup. The CIP describes how EPA will involve the community and address local needs during the Superfund process. EPA and the community will work together by using the tools described in this plan. Active public involvement is crucial to the success of any project. EPA's community involvement activities at the site are designed to inform the public of all cleanup activities and include the community in the decision-making process.

Downtown Wells White Cleaners Site

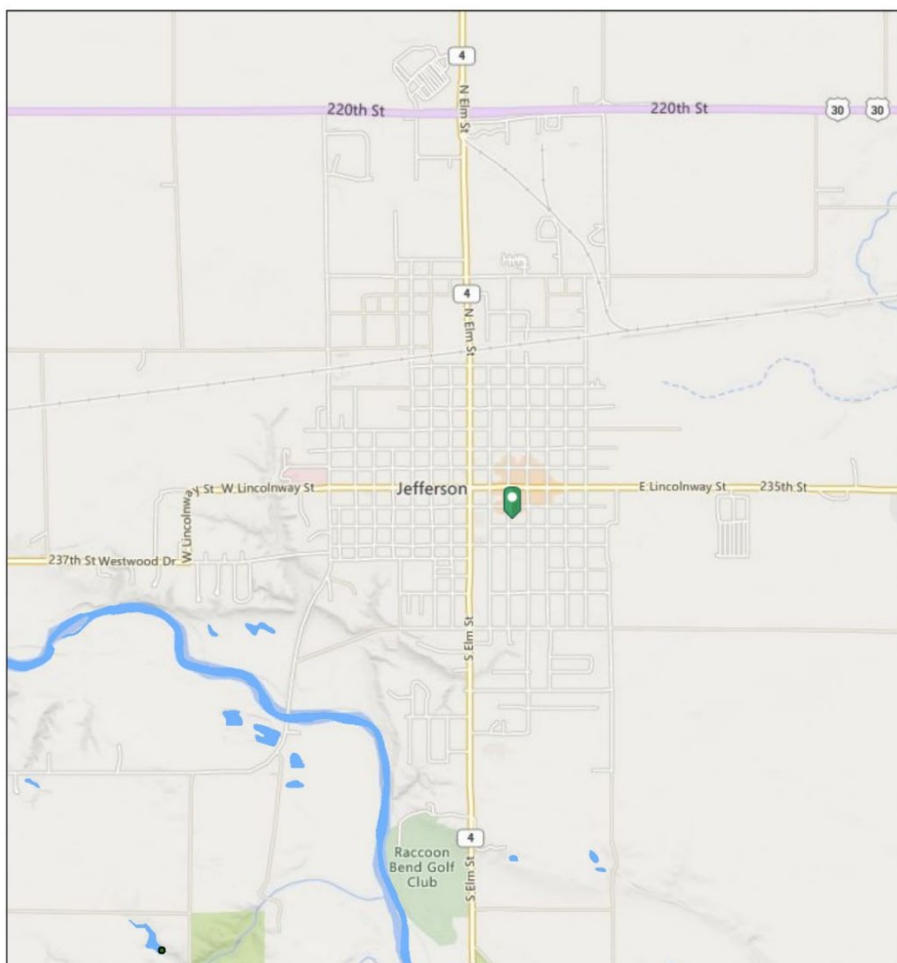


Image credit: U.S. EPA

EPA defines the “community” as those people and entities who have an interest in or are affected by the site. EPA also recognizes that other stakeholders, including local, state, and federal agencies, may have an interest in the site.

This CIP is based on a series of community interviews conducted in April 2024 with the affected community and stakeholders, in accordance with EPA's Superfund community involvement and cleanup guidance.

The CIP is a “living document,” meaning that it can be updated or revised over the course of site cleanup to reflect long-term changes in the community.

## Community Involvement at the Site

Active and participatory community involvement is an important part of the cleanup process. It is also regulated under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), commonly known as “Superfund.” This CIP follows community involvement requirements in the Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) section 117 and the National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP), 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) section 300.415. EPA’s Community Involvement Program is designed to facilitate participation of community members throughout the cleanup process, including the investigation phase and the remedy selection phase. EPA works closely with state and local agencies to provide community involvement throughout the Superfund process.

## Site Overview

The Downtown Wells White Cleaners Superfund Site in Jefferson, Greene County, Iowa, is a former dry-cleaning facility that is now an apartment building with a confirmed tetrachloroethylene (PCE) vapor intrusion exposure pathway. The site is located in downtown Jefferson in an area of mixed residential and commercial buildings. Five former dry-cleaning sites, including White Cleaners, were identified as potential sources for a groundwater plume of cis-1,2-dichloroethylene, a breakdown product of PCE, impacting the city’s public drinking water wells. (See more information under “Contaminants of Concern” below.) Additional sampling will be conducted at the White Cleaners site, in addition to other former dry-cleaning sites in Jefferson, in an attempt to determine which site(s) are contributing sources.

Elevated levels of PCE were found in indoor air and sub-slab soil gas samples collected from the building in November 2023, with the level of PCE in one apartment unit exceeding EPA Removal Management Levels. EPA provided a portable, high-volume air purifier in December 2023 to that apartment unit in which there was an actual exposure risk to residents. The property owner later replaced that air purifier with a depressurization system consisting of two sub-slab venting units in the apartment building, with technical assistance and information provided by EPA.

In March 2024, EPA conducted performance air monitoring at the apartment building to document whether the vapor mitigation system had reduced PCE concentrations. Additional vapor intrusion sampling was also conducted at three commercial and residential properties immediately south of the apartment building to determine whether the PCE contamination has migrated. Passive soil gas samplers were also deployed in the area surrounding the White Cleaners site to determine how far PCE may have migrated. Results from the March 2024 sampling are expected in May 2024, at which time it will be determined what additional action, if any, is necessary.

To view site project information and cleanup documents, please visit EPA’s webpage at: [www.epa.gov/superfund/downtownwellswhitecleaners](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/downtownwellswhitecleaners).

## About the Community

Jefferson became the county seat of Greene County in 1854, some five years after the first family located there in 1849. Jefferson’s population is just under 4,200, according to the 2020 Census. The median household income is nearly \$49,000 and the city’s homeownership rate is about 71.6%. Nearly 22% of Jefferson’s

residents have a bachelor's degree or higher and the employment rate is about 56.2%. Some 60.6% of Jefferson's workforce are employees of private companies and 19.6% of the workers in the city are employed by the local, state, or federal government.

Some 92% of Jefferson's nearly 4,200 residents are White; 3.7% are Hispanic or Latino; nearly 3% are biracial; about 0.7% are Asian; and less than 0.5% are either African American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander alone.

Jefferson Mayor Craig Berry describes the city as a progressive community that exemplifies the meaning of Midwest living and whose citizens "show a genuine concern about life and the values of it for our present and future generations," according to the city's website. Berry, a lifelong Jefferson resident, further describes the city as a great place to raise a family, with a safe and friendly, small-town quality of life and an affordable housing market. He also notes Jefferson's location within an hour of Des Moines and Ames as the perfect place to have "easy access to additional cultural events and attractions, while our distance eliminates the hassles of modern living."



Jefferson, Iowa  
2020 Population

Jefferson has a council-manager local government that combines the political leadership of elected officials in the form of a governing body (council), with the managerial experience of an appointed local government manager (city administrator). In council-manager government, the mayor and council members are the leaders and policymakers elected to represent the community and concentrate on policy issues that are responsive to citizens' needs and wishes. The council appoints the city administrator to carry out policy and ensure that the entire community is being served.

## Environmental Justice

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.

EPA Region 7 programs collaborate closely to make sure that underserved, low-income, and tribal communities facing disproportionate environmental risks have opportunities for meaningful participation in environmental decision-making. Region 7 also coordinates closely with EPA Headquarters and states to support initiatives that provide all people living near Superfund sites with technical assistance, training opportunities, and other services. EPA has a variety of environmental justice resources available at [www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice](https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice), including:

- [Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving \(CPS\) Cooperative Agreement Program](#) provides funding for eligible applicants for projects that address local environmental and public health issues in an affected community. The program assists recipients in building collaborative partnerships to help them understand and address environmental and public health concerns in their communities.
- [Environmental Justice Small Grants Program](#) supports and empowers communities working on solutions to local environmental and public health issues. The program helps communities understand and address exposure to multiple environmental harms and risks.

EJSCREEN







EJSCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that uses environmental indicators for a community to show potential exposures and demographic factors, which then show potential susceptibility. An EJSCREEN analysis for an area with a 1-mile radius around the site in April 2024 found that one of the 13 environmental justice index indicators was at the 80th percentile or above – with Jefferson coming in at the 88th percentile with the number of people over the age of 64 – compared to the rest of Iowa.

Overview of the CIP Process

EPA conducted interviews in April 2024 with two residents, two city officials, and two energy company officials.

Community Issues and Concerns

Most of those interviewed about the Downtown Wells White Cleaners Superfund Site had no knowledge of the site before receiving a site briefing/update from the EPA Region 7 on-scene coordinator (OSC) assigned to the site. The two city officials interviewed were among the city personnel briefed by the EPA OSC, who was accompanied by the EPA community involvement coordinator (CIC) assigned to the site, during a February 2024 meeting at City Hall in Jefferson. All interviewees received site briefings/updates from the OSC prior to answering questions posed by the CIC.

<b>HUMAN HEALTH</b> 	<b>CLEANUP</b> 	<b>ECONOMY</b> 
Interviewees expressed the necessity that any contaminants found in the air, water, or soil that could potentially be harmful to humans be remedied and mitigated appropriately and as quickly as possible.	Interviewees had general concerns about short-term remedies and long-term ramifications, and if additional sampling results yield elevated levels of contaminants that may present a danger of exposure.	There were questions about whether residents and property owners would be responsible for paying the cost of mitigation if contaminants were found on their property.
<b>COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT</b> 	<b>WATER</b> 	<b>METHOD OF COMMUNICATION</b> 
Requests were made that the data and analysis of any results or findings from samplings of air, water, or soil should be accessible to the public and securely retained in a database for future reference, if needed, and to “make sure nothing gets lost.”	Interviewees were relieved to know that the contaminant levels in the city’s public water wells were well below those considered safe for drinking water. Even so, they also understood the importance of sampling to determine the source of the contaminants in the wells.	Email, by far, was the preferred method of informing residents and stakeholders of any updates for the site. Phone calls and face-to-face engagement were also mentioned as possible (though not preferred) communication methods.

Contaminants of Concern

At the site, tetrachloroethylene (PCE), trichloroethylene (TCE), and 1,2-dichloroethylene are considered contaminants of concern (COCs) – and cis-1,2-dichloroethylene is potentially a COC. COCs are chemicals that

need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they pose a potential threat to human health or the environment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has a series of online summaries about contaminants called ToxFAQs. You can find ToxFAQs on the COCs at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq). For more information on contaminants at Superfund sites, please visit: [www.epa.gov/superfund/contaminants-superfund-sites](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/contaminants-superfund-sites).

## **Vapor Intrusion**

Vapor intrusion occurs when vapor-forming chemicals in groundwater evaporate and make their way into indoor air. These vapor-forming chemicals are called volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. This kind of organic chemical compound evaporates under normal indoor temperatures and pressure. The vapors can move through cracks in buildings and foundations and into the air in buildings, which could threaten indoor air quality and human health. The former dry-cleaning facility that is now an apartment building has a confirmed tetrachloroethylene (PCE) vapor intrusion exposure pathway. For more information, please visit: [www.epa.gov/vaporintrusion](http://www.epa.gov/vaporintrusion).

## **PCE**

Perchloroethylene (PCE, sometimes called perchloroethene, tetrachloroethylene, tetrachloroethene or PERC) is considered a contaminant of concern (COC) at the site. COCs are chemicals that need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they are a potential threat to human health or the environment. PCE is a volatile organic compound, or VOC. This kind of organic chemical compound evaporates under normal indoor temperatures and pressure. PCE was once widely used in dry-cleaning and metal degreasing. PCE and its degradation products, trichloroethylene (TCE), cis-1,2-dichloroethylene, and trans-1,2-dichloroethylene, have been detected in indoor air and sub-slab soil gas. The levels of PCE in one apartment unit exceed EPA Removal Management Levels.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has a series of online summaries about contaminants, called ToxFAQs. You can find a ToxFAQ on PCE (listed as tetrachloroethylene) at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq).

## **TCE**

Trichloroethylene (TCE, also trichloroethene) is considered a contaminant of concern (COC) at the site. COCs are chemicals that need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they are a potential threat to human health or the environment. TCE is a volatile organic compound, or VOC. This kind of organic chemical compound evaporates under normal indoor temperatures and pressure. TCE is part of some industrial and commercial processes, including in dry-cleaning facilities. It is one of the most common contaminants at Superfund sites and was among those detected in indoor air and sub-soil gas at Downtown Wells White Cleaners.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has a series of online summaries about contaminants, called ToxFAQs. You can find ToxFAQs on TCE at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq).

## 1,2-DCE

1,2-Dichloroethylene (DCE, also dichloroethene) is considered a contaminant of concern (COC) at the site. COCs are chemicals that need to be addressed by a cleanup action because they are a potential threat to human health or the environment. There are two forms of 1,2-dichloroethylene: cis-1,2-dichloroethylene and trans-1,2-dichloroethylene, which are both sometimes present in a mixture. 1,2-Dichloroethylene is used to make other chemicals in industry and also used in refrigerants, pharmaceuticals manufacturing, or to remove fat from fish or meat. 1,2-Dichloroethylene is most often found in the groundwater at Superfund sites along with other chlorinated organic compounds. It was among those contaminants detected in indoor air and sub-soil gas at Downtown Wells White Cleaners. This site is among several former dry-cleaning facilities in Jefferson that may be a potential course of groundwater plume of cis-1,2-dichloroethylene impacting the city's public drinking water wells.

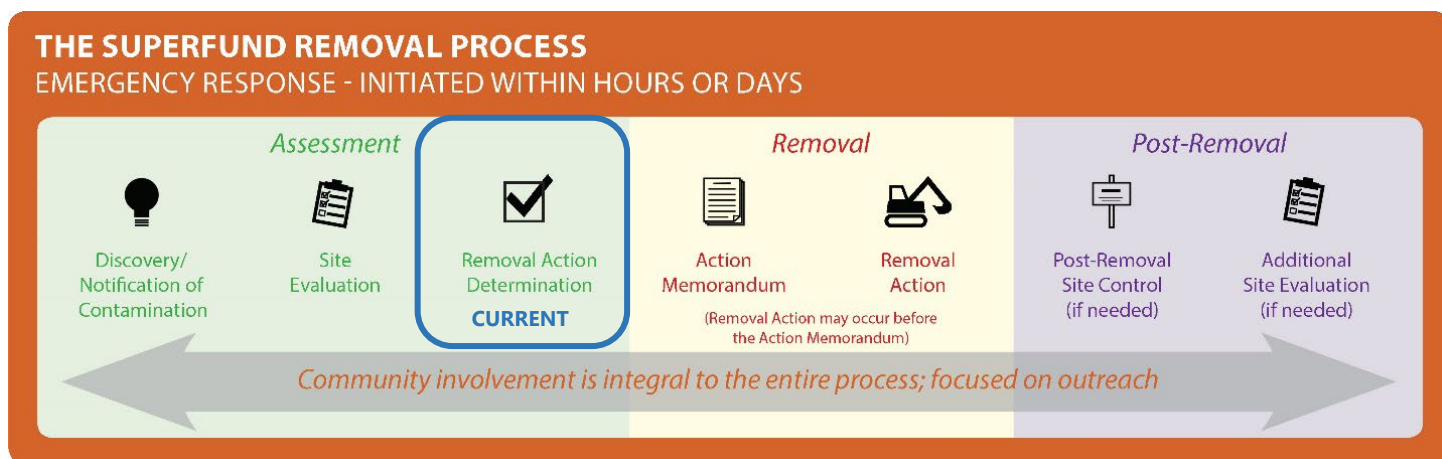
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has a series of online summaries about contaminants, called ToxFAQs. You can find ToxFAQs on 1,2-dichloroethylene (listed as 1,2-dichloroethene) at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaq).

## Superfund Removal Process

Removal responses are common at Superfund sites when the contamination poses an immediate threat to human health and the environment. Removal actions tend to be swift responses to immediate threats from hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants to eliminate dangers to the public. Removals are classified as either emergency, time-critical, or non-time-critical, depending on the extent and type of contamination.

### Superfund Removal Process – Emergency Response

**Emergency removal responses** require an immediate response to releases or threatened releases to the environment. Emergency removals start within hours or days of the determination that a removal action is appropriate. Typical emergency removals address immediate threats such as fires, explosions, toxic spills, and imminent contamination of a water supply. The following section describes the general steps in an emergency removal response.



### Assessment

After the contamination is discovered, EPA evaluates if the site poses a threat to people and the environment and whether hazards need to be addressed immediately or additional site information will be collected.



## *Removal*

The Action Memorandum describes the cleanup method chosen for the site and the reasons for the selection. Because an emergency removal can begin within hours or days of the determination that a removal is appropriate, there is little or no time for planning. Removal action may take place prior to the signing of the Action Memorandum.

## *Post-Removal*

After the removal action, site controls are implemented to protect human health and the environment, if needed. Additional site evaluation may take place to determine whether further action is needed.

# **CIP Community/Stakeholder Interview Questionnaire**

EPA used the following questions when conducting community interviews about the site. The responses from these questions informed the Community Issues and Concerns section of this CIP.

1. Were you aware of the site prior to this meeting?
2. What did you know about it?
3. Do you have any questions about the site?
4. Do you have any concerns about the site and its cleanup?
5. Have you had any site-related experiences with EPA, the state, or any other government officials? How would you describe your experiences? Do you have any concerns about those experiences?
6. What are the best ways to provide information to you? (Examples: web postings, email, mailing post cards, mailing fact sheets, in-person meetings.)
7. Is there anyone else you think might be useful for us to talk to about the site?
8. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?



## **Information Repository**

Site project information is available to the public at web repositories. To view cleanup documents, please visit EPA's website: [www.epa.gov/superfund/downtownwellswhitecleaners](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/downtownwellswhitecleaners). Anyone without Internet access can view these documents online at this location: **Jefferson Public Library**, 200 Lincoln Way, Jefferson, IA 50129; 515-386-2835.

# **Key Contacts**

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