Introduction
As part of its commitment to protect the environment, provide a safe work place, and be a good neighbor in our communities, Columbia Gas of Ohio (Columbia Gas) has a program to study sites where gas was historically manufactured to learn if they might have impacted the environment.

A few years ago, Columbia Gas conducted an environmental study of the property located between 2nd Street, 3rd Street and Jefferson Street. Based on available historical information, a manufactured gas plant (MGP) operated there from 1856 to 1905. The site is about one acre in size and is comprised of multiple parcels owned by two entities.

What were the results of the study?
Laboratory analyses of soil and groundwater samples collected during the site study detected chemical compounds typically associated with gas manufacturing operations.

Wasn’t the site already cleaned up?
The northern portion of the site was cleaned up in 2018 in accordance with Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) rules and then restored per an agreement with that property owner. Columbia Gas is now addressing the southern portion of the site, as shown in yellow in the map below. The Dari Creme and Blevins Auto Sales are adjacent to the southern portion of the site. Some excavation will occur on those properties as well.

What is a manufactured gas plant?
Between the mid-1800s and the mid-1900s, manufactured gas was used throughout the U.S. in homes and businesses as a fuel source for use in heating, lighting and cooking. The gas was captured and cleaned of impurities before being stored in large round structures known as gas holders. These gas holders are prominent features in historical pictures of our communities (see below). As natural gas became more available, the plants that produced manufactured gas were closed. Often, these sites were then sold and used for other purposes.

Are gas manufacturing byproducts considered a risk to health and the environment?
Coal tar contains chemical compounds, some of which are considered hazardous and may be a health concern in certain circumstances. These compounds are a common component of asphalt products, including roadway materials. They are only a human health risk if people directly touch, eat or breathe them in high levels over a prolonged period of time.

What happens next with the project?
Columbia Gas has approval from the property owner to remediate (cleanup) the tarry material and impacted soil from the southern portion of the site this year. The former service station building will be demolished and any remaining underground storage tanks will also be removed.
How long will the cleanup take?
The cleanup is expected to take about three months. It will begin in early June and last through August, weather permitting.

How will the work affect the neighborhood?
Columbia Gas and Haley & Aldrich, an environmental engineering firm hired to manage the remediation work, will implement procedures designed to minimize construction impacts to the neighborhood during this work.

The cleanup activities will take place weekdays between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. Weekend work may occasionally be necessary, pending approval from the city. The work site will be surrounded by a fence, with gates locked after hours. Security will be on-site after hours.

The excavated material will be transported in covered trucks that will follow established commercial routes. No road closures are expected at this time, however, the alley on the west side of the project site will be closed during remediation, while an existing sanitary sewer line is replaced.

People in the area may notice dust and an occasional odor of tar or mothballs during the work. An odor-reducing foam will be used during the cleanup to keep nuisance odors to a minimum. If you detect an unusual odor, please contact Haley & Aldrich’s Construction Manager, Greg Mowatt, at 734-358-4735.

Air monitoring will be conducted during remediation activities to ensure the safety and protection of the workers and surrounding community.

Efforts will also be made to keep the streets clean during the remediation. This includes washing trucks before they leave the work site and street sweeping as needed.

Will the Dari Creme be open during cleanup?
The Dari Creme intends to stay open during the cleanup of the surrounding site, however, parking spots may become more limited during this time. Our contractor will try to sequence the work to impact the Dari Creme as little as possible.

Is it safe for people to be on the former MGP site?
Yes. Following Ohio EPA’s Voluntary Action Program procedures, Columbia Gas evaluated the risks to health and the environment. The evaluation concluded that there are no current risks to public health and the environment. The gas manufacturing residues are located under gravel and asphalt, and the City’s water supply is not affected.

Are government agencies involved with the cleanup?
Yes. We are conducting the second phase of remediation after having consulted with the Ohio EPA and the city of Portsmouth.

Will the site be restored after cleanup?
Yes, the site will be restored. Excavated areas will be backfilled with clean soil and the entire parking lot will be repaved. The temporary construction fencing will be removed.

Where can I get more information?
Columbia Gas wants to keep you informed about our environmental work at the Portsmouth former MGP site. For questions or further information you may contact:

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