

# fact sheet

## Environmental Study at the Fort Wayne Hale Avenue Former Manufactured Gas Plant Site

Northern Indiana  
Public Service  
Company (NIPSCO)  
Merrillville, Indiana

September 2011

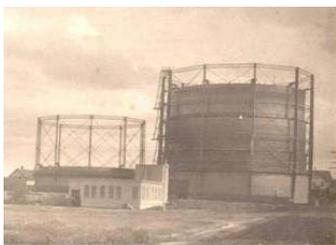
### Introduction

Beginning early in the 1800s, America was fueled largely by coal. One of the uses of coal was to manufacture “town gas,” which made our streets, homes, and businesses cleaner and safer places to be. The manufactured gas era ended in the mid-1900s when natural gas became widely available through the interstate pipeline system. This now outdated energy source has become an environmental challenge for today.

As part of its commitment to protect the environment, provide a safe work place, and be a good neighbor in our communities, NIPSCO has a program to study sites where gas was produced to learn if they might have impacted the environment.

A search of historical records indicates a NIPSCO predecessor company operated manufactured gas plants at two locations in Fort Wayne: 1501 Hale Avenue and Superior east of Barr Street. This fact sheet discusses the former gas plant at 1501 Hale Avenue, which operated from 1924 until the 1950s. NIPSCO’s local operations area facility is located on the property today.

### What is a manufactured gas plant?



A manufactured gas plant produced “town gas” by heating coal and/or oil in a closed vessel. The gas was captured and cleaned of

impurities before being stored in large cylindrical structures known as gas holders. Town gas was distributed first for lighting streets, homes, and businesses, and then for heating and cooking. These gas holders are prominent features in historical pictures of our communities.

### Why is NIPSCO studying these plants now?

Though these gas plants are believed to have been operated in keeping with the standards and practices of their times, today we know more about potential impacts to



the environment. We are studying the environmental conditions at these former manufactured gas plant locations and, if need be, are taking actions to manage impacts to the environment.

### Are government agencies involved with the investigations?

We are conducting our environmental study in cooperation with the Indiana Department of the Environment. IDEM is overseeing the project to ensure that the project achieves a satisfactory level of human health and environmental protection.

### What work has been done at the Hale Avenue site?

We have employed engineering firms experienced with gas manufacturing sites to look for production residues and collect samples of soil and water on the NIPSCO property, in city-owned parkways, and in the adjacent St. Mary’s River.

Independent laboratories certified by IDEM performed chemical analyses on the samples. The results are used to guide decisions on further study and/or cleanup (remediation).

## Are gas manufacturing residues considered a risk to health and the environment?

Some of the chemical compounds found in manufactured gas plant residues of interest to us are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). They are produced in combustion processes such as burning coal, oil and wood, and are carried by the wind to surrounding areas. Urban soil normally contains PAHs, often at levels exceeding government standards for residential soil.

Medical research indicates that health effects from PAHs can range from minor irritation to the skin and nose and throat to more serious effects. Some of the PAH compounds have the ability to cause cancer in laboratory animals when they are exposed to them at high doses over a long period of time.

For more information on PAHs, you can refer to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's web site: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxFAQs/index.asp>

## How do you determine if there is a problem?

IDEM has developed numerical levels for many compounds in groundwater and soil that are considered to be safe under any circumstance. If concentrations of the compounds in water and soil samples are below these levels, there is no concern for human health or the environment. If concentrations are above these levels, however, it does not necessarily mean that human or environmental health will be affected; it does mean that more investigation and evaluation are needed before we can draw conclusions about the results.

*We have found nothing during our study of the Hale Avenue site that indicates people on the property, in the surrounding area or using the river are at risk from any of the compounds associated with gas manufacturing residues. Much of the site is paved, residues are located at depth, and groundwater is not in use.*



### Where can I get more information?

NIPSCO wants to keep you informed about our environmental project at this former manufactured gas plant site. For questions or further information, you may contact:

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