

## 2229 Main Street Oversight Committee

*Members: Paul Boehm, Kerry Diskin, Deborah Farnsworth, Len Rappoli, Pam Rockwell, Fred Seward, Candace Wight, and Board of Selectmen liaison Ann Shapiro*

The 2229 Main Street Oversight Committee was formed to monitor the cleanup at Starmet, formerly Nuclear Metals, Inc. (NMI), a former defense contractor that is now a superfund site. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the agency in charge of the cleanup. Currently EPA is overseeing a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS). The investigation will determine the extent of the contamination at the site and the pathways by which the public may be exposed. The feasibility study will develop possible cleanup strategies. The EPA has hired the consulting firm *de maximis inc.* to conduct the RI/FS.

During 2008, *de maximis inc.* completed most of the soil and water sampling that will be used to determine the risks at the site and the extent of the materials that will need to be remediated. This site is contaminated with depleted uranium, beryllium, and other laboratory chemicals. There are also PCBs located in most of the areas where there is uranium contamination in surface soil, which means that these areas will definitely trigger a remediation action. (These areas are all close to buildings and enclosed by fences.) A major plume of uranium in the ground above the bedrock has also been identified heading from the former holding basin, under the buildings, and towards the Assabet River.

But this year the principal focus of the Committee and the EPA has been on the buildings and the hazards they contain. In June of 2007, Starmet had a fire in a contaminated area of one of the buildings. Afterwards, the Concord Fire Department and the EPA decided that they needed to determine whether materials in the buildings constituted an imminent threat. The Fire Department did a thorough investigation of all of the buildings and developed a checklist of hazardous conditions to be dealt with (like repacking hazardous materials lockers so that the doors can be closed.) The Fire Department presented this list to Starmet, but the company did not fix these problems or remove the hazardous materials. The EPA decided that these hazards needed to be dealt with immediately, and began a Time Critical Removal Action on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008. EPA specialists removed flammable liquids, compressed natural gas cylinders, toxic compressed gas cylinders, caustic materials, flammable metal powders, and other hazardous materials. EPA also drained and removed tanks of radioactive, contaminated acids. The Committee was informed as these events were taking place, but the real driving force behind this part of the cleanup was the Concord

Fire Department and the proactive efforts of Fire Chief Ken Willette to prevent another incident like the fire of 2007.

In May of 2008 the Committee participated in an EPA public meeting to discuss the Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA) to remove the buildings at the Starmet site. There is radioactive contamination in all parts of the buildings, including offices, due mostly to a leaky roof and standing water. In some areas, water is above the level of the electrical outlets. This is a particular danger to emergency workers who might have to respond at the site. The committee worked with the Fire Department and the local advocacy group Citizens Research and Environmental Watch (CREW) to encourage the EPA to remove the buildings down to cement slabs and dispose of the building materials off the site. Concord Selectman Jeff Wieand submitted written comments on behalf of the Town supporting the removal of the buildings. In September, the EPA announced its decision to require the removal of the buildings and the disposal of the building materials in proper facilities off of the Starmet property. This removal action is expected to take 3-4 years after funding is secured from the United States Army and other principal responsible parties. Currently, EPA is negotiating with the remaining Starmet workers to find a new location for their production facilities, so that the physical work of removing the buildings can begin.

More information about the Starmet cleanup can be found at the following websites. The committee does not have control over the content of these sites:

- [www.nmisite.org](http://www.nmisite.org) is the website created by the contractor *de maximis*. It includes a list of the current activities at the site, including data and maps from the sampling that has been completed.
- The EPA also has a website with historical information. Go to [www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/findsite/fndindex.htm](http://www.epa.gov/region1/superfund/findsite/fndindex.htm) and search for "Nuclear Metals".
- [www.crewconcord.org](http://www.crewconcord.org) is the website for the environmental advocacy group CREW.