

Unit Six De-Industrialization Paper: Al-Tech Steel Mill – Watervliet, New York



Source Five

Introduction

Al Tech, just like many other properties in the United States, had its time of glory. But with the glory comes a price, for Al Tech, it resulted in abuse and threats to the community.

A Little History

At the time of the early twentieth century, Al Tech Specialty Steel Corporation blossomed as a business “utilized solely for production, and activities associated with the production, of stainless steel” (Source Four). After many years of abuse, “production processes resulted in a variety of wastes,” leaving this property “officially off-limits to the public since 1994, because of the dangerous pollutants it harbors” (Source One).



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Investigation

There is no question that this property needs attention and is a threat. Luckily, “The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has taken over the site-wide investigation activities at the Al Tech Specialty Steel site” (Source Four). According to the DEC, this site “represents a significant threat to public health or the environment; action is required” (Source Four). As of June 2014, this organization had a goal to “gather additional environmental data across the entire facility and determine whether past investigations were adequate to characterize contamination on the AL Tech property” (Source Four). Due to the large nature of the site, the operation has been split into phases. Investigation will be completed by areas “divided into squares, each 200 by 200 feet,” and “other media, such as groundwater, surface

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water, and various building materials are also targeted for sample collection and analysis”

(Source Four).



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Threats

Investigations from the DEC have revealed quite a number of concerns to the environment and public. “ Sampling of the surficial soils, buildings, and pits...revealed inorganic contamination”

(Source Three). “ In several other areas, elevated levels of arsenic, lead and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were detected in the surface soils” (Source Three). Not only are the land infected, but “ground water is contaminated with metals” as well (Source Three).



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Clean Up

Fortunately, measures have been taken in order to make the place safe. “In 1997, surface soil contaminated with PCBs at concentrations over 25 mg/kg at the former waste oil container storage area were excavated and covered with clean fill” (Source Three). “ A groundwater recovery system was installed to pump groundwater to the on-site treatment plant. The system operated for approximately eight years when groundwater data indicated recovery and treatment was no longer necessary. The wastewater treatment plant was decommissioned in 2004” (Source 4). Unfortunately, these measures were not enough, “The complex is currently scheduled to be demolished, but this can’t happen until the ground material dissipates – estimated to happen

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around 2015.” (Source One).



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Employee Reunion

At the company’s peak, it employed thousands of workers. In an article by The Record News, in 2011, these employees planned a reunion. This group of individuals had a “vast selection of stories and nicknames” (Source 6). Moreover they were “just like a big family” (Source 6). Ruff, a former employee, remarks, “Working there was a wonderful work experience. I never regretted anything and I miss Altech” (Source 6).



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Conclusion

“Due to lack of work in the industry,” Altech slowly declined into what it is today (Source 6).

But unlike other industrial ruins, DEC has stepped up to handle the situation, for it is expected this year that Altech, now renamed RealCo Incorporated to be demolished.



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Sources

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