



Maryland Department of the  
Environment

## FACTS ABOUT:

### FORMER FAIRCHILD REPUBLIC SITE (MD-56)

#### SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The former Fairchild Republic Site (i.e., the “Site”) is located at 18434 Showalter Road in Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland 21742. The Site is currently occupied by the Hagerstown Regional Airport and various commercial and light industrial tenants. Buildings at the Site flank the north-south and east-west runways, which occupy the majority of the Site. The three major areas of environmental concern at the Site are the former Main Plant complex on the southeastern portion of the Site, the former Plant 12 area on the southwestern portion of the Site, and the former Plant 11 and Hot Fire Pit area on the northwestern portion of the Site.

#### SITE HISTORY

The Site had been used as an airplane manufacturing facility and associated airfield beginning in 1928 by the Kreider-Reisner Aircraft Company, Inc., which became a subsidiary of the Fairchild Aircraft Corporation in 1929. The airfield and airport itself was sold to the City of Hagerstown in 1933, while Fairchild maintained ownership of the hangar buildings and manufacturing facilities flanking the runway. The plant structures at the Site were used for various stages of airplane and airplane component manufacturing, while the Hot Fire area was used as an emergency fire response testing and training area, with an approximately 4-acre associated land-filling area. The Site was permitted by the State of Maryland as a designated hazardous waste facility from 1980 to 1983. Fairchild continued airplane manufacturing activities at the Site until 1983, when then current economic conditions forced Fairchild out of the aviation business. The Main Plant complex was donated to the State of Maryland in 1983, who then sold the property to Top-Flight Limited Partnership in 1987. The composite bonding plant, Plant 12, continued to be operated by Fairchild to fill preexisting contracts to Boeing, Lockheed, and Saab. Plant 12 was sold to Rohr Industries in 1987, who continued the manufacturing of aircraft parts before closing the plant in 1993. The Plant 11 and Hot Fire Pit area were sold by Fairchild to Washington County, Maryland in 1979, with an adjoining area used by Fairchild for drying of chrome sludge being purchased by the County and added to the property in 1988. The ownership of portions of the property that had been donated to the State was transferred to either the City of Hagerstown or Washington County by 1990.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATIONS AND ACTIONS

Chlorinated solvent and chromium contamination has been identified in all three of the major areas of concern at the Fairchild Republic property. Investigations of groundwater at the Site by



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the State of Maryland were performed at the Site as early as the 1950s; however, the first significant and sustained State actions began in the late 1970s, when groundwater investigations performed by the State and private contractors hired by the Site ownership identified elevated concentrations of chromium and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), including chlorinated solvents, in groundwater at the Site and on down-gradient adjoining properties. Additionally, beginning in the 1980s, numerous hazardous waste violations were cited by the State under Fairchild and Rohr's hazardous waste permits. Various environmental investigations and actions have occurred at the Site since this time. The most significant are as follows.

Between 1979 and 1984, excavation and removal of chromium-contaminated materials was performed from the chromium sludge drying basins located in the Hot Fire Pit area of the Site. Soil in this area was excavated to the bedrock. Throughout the 1980s, approximately 5,000 cubic yards of chromium-contaminated soil and waste was removed from this area and a clay cap was installed.

In 1985, approximately 1,000 cubic yards of chromium and chlorinated solvent-contaminated soil were removed from the vicinity of a drainage outfall and ditch, identified as Outfall 5, located just south of the Plant 12 structure.

In 1986, three chromic acid plating pits located in the Main Plant Complex were decommissioned. Three concrete tanks and underlying chromium-contaminated soil were removed from the Site.

From the early 1980s to the early 1990s, low levels of chlorinated solvent contamination were identified in various off-Site potable wells in the vicinity of the Site. Many of these properties and the Site itself were subsequently hooked into the local municipal water supply. From early 1990s to the early 2000s, the concentrations of chlorinated solvents in the off-Site wells were shown to be decreasing over time. On-Site contaminant concentrations, while more pronounced, were also trending significantly downward, except for at the Plant 11 and Hot Fire Pit area, where the underlying karst geology complicated investigation and remediation efforts.

To address the difficulties posed by the karst geology underlying the Site, an ozone sparging unit was installed at the Site in 1999. While the elevated concentrations of chlorinated solvents persisted at the Hot Fire Pit area of the Site, a noted decrease in their concentration was noted during the ozone sparging treatment. Additionally, the overall chlorinated solvent plume was greatly reduced and contained by the ozone sparging treatment. However, it should be noted that the air sparging unit had little effect on chromium contamination in groundwater under the Hot Fire Pit area, which wildly fluctuated from as high as 21 parts per million to non-detect, sometimes at the same sample location. The ozone sparging unit began experiencing technical problems and malfunction in late 2004 and early 2005. As a result, in early 2006, the State approved a two-year shutdown of the unit, in order to allow Fairchild's technicians the



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opportunity to repair the unit and return it to good working order. Monitoring was to continue during this time. Prior to the recommissioning of the air sparging system, Fairchild declared Chapter 11 Bankruptcy in March 2009 and, as of October 2010, associated legal proceedings continued.

## **CURRENT SITE STATUS**

Following the start of the bankruptcy proceedings, Site investigation was placed on a temporary hiatus. The Controlled Hazardous Substance (i.e., CHS) Enforcement Division of the Maryland Department of the Environment (i.e., MDE) is currently in the process of reevaluating the project and re-securing Site access. Site investigations had been performed by private consultants hired by Fairchild; however, future investigation will have direct oversight by the MDE and will be aimed at determining the current status of the on-Site wells and the ozone sparging system, the current state of groundwater below the Site, and the effect of the system shut-off on the chemical and hydrologic dynamic of the contaminant plume since sampling was last performed in August 2006. A letter to inquire about reestablishing Site access has been drafted and shall be sent to representatives of the Hagerstown Regional Airport in July 2012.



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