

# PROGRESS UPDATE

## Kingsford Study Area

*Ford Motor Company and The Kingsford Products Company have developed this Progress Update to share information with the community regarding the investigations and activities being conducted in the Kingsford Study Area. This Update discusses ongoing activities and work that was performed this summer. Ford and Kingsford Products remain committed to working with the residents of Kingsford, the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and the City of Kingsford to address environmental conditions in the study area.*

### **METHANE**

Ford and Kingsford Products are continuing to monitor the methane in the study area. Methane is a natural compound used for heating and cooking. It is neither toxic nor harmful to the body if one breathes it. Methane becomes a potential fire hazard at concentrations of 5 percent to 15 percent in air in a confined area. The methane detectors installed in area houses are designed to sound long before a safety hazard exists, at levels from 0.5 percent to 1.25 percent of methane in air. At significantly higher levels, asphyxiation could occur in a confined space. Again, the methane detectors sound long before this situation could occur.

As part of our activities in the study area, we are actively venting methane at the Riverside Disposal Area (RDA) through a soil vapor extraction system. This particular system safely burns the methane in an enclosed flare. The system is enclosed and fenced to ensure that no one comes into contact with it. The flare system is used at the RDA because the permit issued by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) requires it. We also are using soil vapor extraction systems at four other locations in the study area: Breen and Garfield, Grant and Emmet, Woodward and Westwood, and Lodal Park. The MDEQ does not require the other systems to have a flare due to lower amounts of methane.

In addition to the active venting systems, the companies also use passive venting systems. The passive systems use temporarily installed flagpoles, which function as outlets for releasing the methane. The flagpoles are relocated as necessary to allow for the venting of methane without disrupting community activities. We use flagpoles because they are aesthetically more pleasing than pipes. Both the active and passive venting systems are operating under a permit issued by the MDEQ.

ARCADIS, the engineering firm retained by Ford and Kingsford Products to investigate the environmental conditions in the study area, will continue monitoring and operating the five active soil vapor extraction systems and the passive venting systems. Should ARCADIS suspect other areas with methane, those locations will be investigated.

### **GROUNDWATER AND PILOT GROUNDWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM**

The companies continue to monitor groundwater quality in the study area. ARCADIS periodically samples groundwater from monitoring wells. The groundwater contains methane and other constituents, primarily from wood degradation. Most of the affected groundwater is very deep and it is unlikely that residents would come into contact with it. The City's drinking water well fields are

located outside of the study area. The groundwater beneath the study area does not flow toward the City's well fields. The City regularly tests the drinking water supply and it continues to meet federal and state drinking water standards.

Ford and Kingsford Products, in coordination with the MDEQ and the City of Kingsford, have built and are operating the first phase of a pilot groundwater treatment system at the river. The pilot system extracts affected groundwater before it reaches the river. This will help us understand the groundwater quality and its general characteristics, including its flow and movement. After the affected groundwater is collected, it is pre-treated and sent to the Kingsford/Iron Mountain wastewater treatment plant for final treatment. The groundwater is pretreated to control odors and methane.

ARCADIS expects to finish constructing the second phase of the pilot treatment system in September 2001, which will give the system additional capacity and treatment capabilities. The pilot project will help us evaluate response options regarding groundwater conditions near the river. Once we have more information, Ford and Kingsford Products will work with MDEQ on the appropriate next steps. The companies also will continue to work with the City and the wastewater treatment plant to ensure that it has the appropriate capacity to properly treat groundwater sent to the plant.

#### **MENOMINEE RIVER ASSESSMENT**

As we mentioned in our last *Progress Update*, Ford and Kingsford Products conducted a biological assessment of the Menominee River. The assessment focused on whether the affected groundwater discharging to the river has impacted the water quality or the fish and invertebrate organisms (organisms that live in the sediments) at numerous locations in the river. ARCADIS collected 25 samples of invertebrate organisms in sediments, with 15 samples near the shore and 10 samples deeper in the river. Ten areas covering over 3 miles of shoreline were sampled for fish. Based on the data, there is

no evidence that the river, the fish, and the invertebrate organisms have been affected. All samples meet Michigan's water quality standards. ARCADIS conducted the investigation in accordance with protocols used by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assess streams and rivers.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) conducted similar sampling in this area and other nearby areas from 1996 to 1999 when it evaluated the re-permitting of dams along the river. WDNR's sampling results are consistent with our investigation results.

#### **METHANE DETECTOR ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM**

As we already reported to the community, Ford and Kingsford Products did not find any methane above natural background levels during visits to more than 950 residences in the study area. The purpose of our visits was to confirm that each house had the appropriate number of detectors, that the detectors were properly installed and functioning well, and to determine whether any methane was present in houses. Overall, the program has been successful in decreasing the number of non-methane-related alarms from the beginning of the methane detector program. Should your methane detector sound, we still urge you to call the Kingsford Public Safety Department or the Breitung Township Fire Department from a neighbor's house as a safety precaution. Please call our community information line at 1-800-315-4288 if you need another information packet about the methane detectors. These packets were distributed to each household that we visited.

ARCADIS prepared a summary report of the findings of the residential methane detector checks. A copy of the report will be placed in the information repository at the Dickinson County Library in Iron Mountain.

ARCADIS is continuing to work with the businesses in the study area to evaluate the appropriate methane detector program for each business. Some of the businesses use materials or machinery that can cause non-methane-related alarms. As a result, we are

working with individual businesses to identify a program that is best suited to their needs.

#### **ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND UPCOMING WORK**

Ford and Kingsford Products submitted a draft remedial investigation report to the MDEQ. The report summarizes all the investigation activities that have been performed over the past several years. ARCADIS is currently responding to comments from MDEQ on the report. Once MDEQ approves the report, the agency will make it available to the public. Because conducting a remedial investigation and writing a final remedial investigation report is a lengthy process, Ford and Kingsford Products have put together interim response action plans (IRAPs), which are described below, to move forward in addressing environmental conditions. The companies are interested in keeping activities moving forward in a timely manner.

Ford and Kingsford Products will soon submit an IRAP to the MDEQ for the Riverside Disposal Area. The plan will explain how the companies will address environmental conditions at the RDA. Two small, localized areas at the RDA that exceed MDEQ's residential criteria for direct contact with soil have been fenced off to prevent people from accessing the area.

With the approval of MDEQ, ARCADIS will construct a cap at the RDA as part of the interim response activities. This work will consist of placing approximately 2½ feet of soil in the area, grading the soil, and planting grass. Ford and Kingsford Products are also working with the City of Kingsford on the potential reuse of some areas at the RDA once interim response activities are completed. One part of the area will be converted into a soccer field, as requested by the City. Constructing a cap and reusing former environmental areas are common redevelopment practices across the United States.

Ford and Kingsford Products will also submit an IRAP to the MDEQ for the Lodal Park area. MDEQ has concluded that Lodal Park is safe for playing on or walking across.

A soil vapor extraction system is currently venting methane in the area. The buried material at Lodal Park, which consists of wood fragments, charred wood, charcoal, tree trimmings, and grass clippings, is covered with sand and soil. ARCADIS frequently monitors the area to ensure that there continues to be adequate soil coverage.

In February 2001, the companies submitted an IRAP to MDEQ for the Northeast Pit area, which is located on the old plant property. Once MDEQ approves the plan, Ford and Kingsford Products will move forward to address environmental conditions in the area. ARCADIS continues to monitor the Northeast Pit area for tar seeps on a weekly basis and collect tar, if found.

ARCADIS will also continue its investigation work in the old plant area. This will involve installing additional soil probes and monitoring wells, taking samples, and continuing to monitor the soil probes and monitoring wells that are already in place. The sampling information will assist us in working with MDEQ on next steps.

#### **COMMUNITY INFORMATION LINE**

If you would like a copy of previous *Progress Updates*, or if you have any questions regarding activities in the study area, please call our community information line at 1-800-315-4288. This line operates between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Central Time, Monday through Friday. You may also leave a message at this number during other hours. We will return your call as soon as possible.