

# Former Mount Hope Street Manufactured Gas Plant Cleanup Program to Start

Liberty Utilities  
North Attleboro, Massachusetts

Summer 2020

## Introduction

Beginning early in the 1800s, America was fueled largely by coal. One of the uses of coal was to manufacture “town gas” which expanded the availability of gas and 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.

As part of its commitment to protect the environment, Liberty Utilities (Liberty) proactively studies sites where gas was produced in this manner and cleans them up if they have impacted the environment. One such former gas plant was operated by the North Attleboro Gas and Light Company and was located at the southeast corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Mount Hope Street in North Attleboro. This plant operated from the mid-1800s until 1928 when it ceased gas manufacturing operations and became a gas distribution facility. The property is currently owned and used as a natural gas distribution facility by Liberty.

## What is a manufactured gas plant?

A manufactured gas plant produced “town gas” by heating coal, coke, and/or oil in a closed vessel. The gas generated by the process was captured and cleaned of impurities before being stored in large round structures, known as gas holders, and piped locally to users. Town gas was distributed first for lighting streets, homes, and businesses, and eventually gained acceptance for heating and cooking.

## How can manufactured gas plants impact the environment?

As with many industrial processes, gas manufacturing produced byproducts and residues. Coal tar is the primary byproduct associated with these sites. When these plants closed down, the tar was often left on the property in underground structures. Over the years, the tar and other residues may have impacted the environment.



## Did the Mount Hope Street manufactured gas facility impact the environment?

Although manufactured gas plants are believed to have operated under the standards and practices of their times, today we know more about their potential impacts to the environment.

Liberty, along with its environmental contractor, AECOM, have studied the site extensively. These studies have helped identify where residues or environmental impacts are located. The studies included sampling of soil and groundwater both on the site and in adjacent areas, and sampling of sediment and surface water within the Ten Mile River and Mire Brook.

The environmental studies completed at the former gas plant site have found environmental impacts that require attention. The areas requiring attention include portions of Liberty’s property, portions of the Ten Mile River and Mire Brook and portions of several adjacent properties.

## Are government agencies involved?

We are about to begin environmental cleanup at the former Mount Hope Street manufactured gas plant site in accordance with the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP) and an Administrative Consent Order issued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Under the MCP, all work is

heavily regulated and must meet all relevant environmental laws and regulations. The work is also completed under the direction of a Licensed Site Professional. In our activities at the site, we are also working closely with the town of North Attleboro, including the Town Manager and the North Attleboro Conservation Commission and Department of Public Works.

### **What cleanup actions have already been completed?**

Liberty previously completed cleanup actions to address environmental impacts within its operating area at 439 Mount Hope Street. These actions included:

- Removal of approximately 1,700 tons of impacted soil from the Liberty property. This material was transported to an appropriately licensed facility for treatment or reuse.
- Constructed a cover over remaining impacted soil and installed stormwater management systems.

### **How will Liberty address the remaining environmental impacts?**

Additional actions are planned that will comprise the long-term cleanup project for the site. These actions will aim to restore the environment at the former gas plant site and neighboring properties so that it continues to be safe to use over the long term. These actions include:

- Removal of impacted soil.
- Removal of impacted sediment within select areas of the Ten Mile River and Mire Brook.
- Restoration of river, wetland, and upland areas.
- Returning adjacent properties to prior use.

### **When will the cleanup project be conducted? How long will it take?**

The site work is expected to begin in August 2020 and will take an estimated nine to fifteen months to complete, depending on a number of factors including weather conditions.

### **How exactly will the work be done? What are the steps?**

Liberty has already completed the design plans and specifications and received a number of environmental

permits. The plans detail how the work will be performed and have been discussed in detail with the affected property owners in order to obtain access agreements to complete the work.

When construction begins, the limits of the construction (or work) areas will be staked, and certain areas will be cleared of brush and vegetation. Temporary dams will be constructed in Mire Brook and Ten Mile River to allow for river/brook diversion. In addition, certain areas of the site will be “de-watered” – so that soil or sediment can be removed “in the dry.” Water collected during this process will be treated in a temporary water treatment system or transported to an offsite treatment facility.

Once soil and sediment are removed, the excavated material will be taken off-site to a licensed disposal or treatment facility. The excavated areas will then be filled with clean soil.

Once this work is completed, impacted areas will be restored. Vegetation will be planted, and other wetland mitigation efforts will be employed to restore these resource areas as close as possible to a pre-construction condition.

### **What are the project’s safety measures?**

Liberty’s environmental projects are carried out under plans that are designed to ensure the health and safety of workers and the neighboring community. During the cleanup work, the site will be secured by a fence, and the gates will be locked when the workers are not present. During work on adjacent properties, the work area will be temporarily fenced. At various times, traffic may be controlled for trucks entering and leaving the site.

Based on the nature of the impacts, we expect the work may produce noise, typical of any construction site, and odors at times. Coal tar smells very similar to mothballs or roofing tar. Workers will be able to reduce the odors with foam and tarps. In addition, the air will be monitored for dust and chemical emissions, using equipment that works much like smoke detectors.

**Where can I get more information?** We are committed to keeping you informed about our environmental activities at the former Mount Hope Street manufactured gas plant site. Please contact us if you have questions or require additional information:

Website: [LibertyUtilities.com/mthopestreetcleanup/](http://LibertyUtilities.com/mthopestreetcleanup/)

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