

Frequently asked questions

Q What is a manufactured gas plant?

A In the mid-1800s and early 1900s, before natural gas was available as an energy source, more than 1,500 manufactured gas plants (MGPs) were located in cities and towns across the country. These plants used coal and oil to produce gas for the lighting, heating and cooking needs of the local community. With the arrival of natural gas in the 1950s, most of the MGP sites in Wisconsin were no longer needed and were closed. As was common practice at the time, byproducts of the gas-making process were left buried on-site. Wisconsin has about 60 MGP sites across the state.

Q What is SWL&P's connection to manufactured gas plants?

A SWL&P owned and operated a manufactured gas plant in Superior from 1889-1904. After 1904 SWL&P purchased manufactured gas from a company in Duluth, Minnesota, and held it for sale from 1904 to 1959 to SWL&P customers at the same location. Natural gas became available in 1959.

Q Who will pay for this remediation?

A SWL&P is paying for the initial cleanup of the MGP investigation, cleanup and monitoring. Once complete, SWL&P will work closely with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to determine recoverability in a future rate filing.

Q What chemicals are associated with MGP residues?

A The residues found at MGP sites comprise many chemicals and generally include polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). PAHs, found in MGP residues such as coal tar, naturally occur in coal, crude oil and gasoline. They also may be formed when organic materials such as wood, tobacco or even foods burn at high temperatures.

VOCs get their name from their ability to pass easily from a liquid into a gaseous state. They are compounds commonly used to build and maintain homes, in cleaning products and in industrial manufacturing processes. MGP-related VOCs are major ingredients in nail polish, disinfectants, moth repellants and many other commercial products.

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Q Is drinking water affected?

A No, SWL&P sources the water it delivers directly from Lake Superior on the far side of Park Point.

Q What should I do if I have a concern or a question about the manufactured gas plant remediation?

A For additional information, including submitting a question or concern, please visit swlp.com/mgpremediation or call 715-395-6344.