

UPDATE: Alton Post Office Cleanup

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ALTON - After demolition at the end of 2016, the site of the former Alton Post Office is about to go into its next phase of cleanup.

The site was once used as a gas plant, which provided heating and lighting to Alton residents from the late 19th Century until the 1940s. Because of its previous usage as a gas plant, Ameren Illinois is inspecting the site and doing any necessary remediation of potential pollutants such as coal tar, which may still exist in that area. In previous

interviews with Riverbender.com, Ameren Illinois said it was doing the cleanup proactively, and no one living or working near the site was in any danger of contamination.

After its demolition, the site on Belle Street had to be tested and maintained before a recommendation for remediation could be sent to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Currently, the design of that plan is in the works.

"We're refining our remediation design plan for the former Alton Post Office site with the Illinois EPA," Ameren Illinois Communications Executive Brian Bretsch said. "Once this plan is finalized, we will share the scope of the work with Alton city officials. We will host a public open house where representatives from Ameren Illinois, the project coordinator and the Illinois EPA will be available to explain project details and answer questions. The current plan is to start remediation in the fourth quarter of this year."

Many Altonians may have seen trucks recently entering and leaving the fenced-off site. In an email, Bretsch said those trucks are consolidating material generated from the investigation activities conducted during the last few months on the former manufactured gas plant site.

"The vacuum truck was being used to transfer the water from drums and totes to a larger tank for disposal," Bretsch said in an email. "In addition, asphalt, drill cuttings and rock debris mixed with soil is being consolidated into a roll-off box for transport to an approved landfill for disposal. We will also be doing some general cleanup on the site. A large tree that fell on the site will be removed as well as broken glass and trash."

There is no available time frame regarding the length of the remediation process. Ameren Illinois is also working towards remediation on two other area gas plants; one on South Sixth Street in Downtown Belleville and another on Lynch Avenue in East St. Louis.

