

# NPL Site Narrative for Malta Rocket Fuel Area

## MALTA ROCKET FUEL AREA Malta, New York

**Conditions at proposal (June 10, 1986):** The Malta Rocket Fuel Area is in Malta, Saratoga County, New York. The site consists of about 445 acres. Approximately 145 acres are enclosed by chainlink fencing with barbed wire; the other 300 acres are wooded and essentially have no industrial activity of the kind carried on inside the fenced portion. An extensive residential subdivision, Luther Forest, is approximately 1 mile to the southwest. The land north, east, and south is uninhabited for at least 1 mile.

From the 1940s through the mid-1960s, General Electric Co. (GE) operated a Rocket Test Station as a contractor to the U.S. Government, which owned the site. GE tested ordnance and rocket engines, which included experimentation with exotic rocket fuels. The site was operated under some level of security, and many records have been destroyed, making it difficult to assemble an accurate record of past activities.

In the mid-1960s, the New York State Energy Resources and Development Authority (NYSERDA) bought the entire site from the U.S. Government and began leasing portions of the fenced 145 acres to various companies engaged in energy-related research. Wright-Malta Corp., a company started by former GE employees, continued some ordnance testing and branched off into energy-related research as well (for example, pyrolysis of solid waste and burning the resulting gases to generate electricity). In the fall of 1984, NYSERDA sold about 85 of the 145 acres inside the fence to Wright-Malta Corp. Currently, three other companies operate in the fenced area in addition to Wright-Malta.

In June 1979, NYSERDA contacted the State Department of Health (DOH) and the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for advice on how to dispose of rocket fuels left from GE's earlier research. Because of the extremely hazardous nature of at least one of the fuels, unsymmetrical dimethyl hydrazine, the regulatory agencies took a year to agree on the best disposal method. In July 1980, a restricted burning permit was issued to NYSERDA and its disposal contractor. The fuels were then burned under the direction of DEC.

Recent analyses conducted by DOH and DEC detected significant concentrations of carbon tetrachloride, trichloroethylene, chloroform, and dibromochloromethane in the three drinking water wells at the Test Station. One of the wells serves as a backup but is rarely used. DOH has advised the tenants not to drink the water. About 1,900 people are served by wells within 3 miles of the site.

Area soils are sandy, with ground water at approximately 20 feet below grade. The water supply for Luther Forest comes from two shallow wells in the sand aquifer located approximately 6,000 feet to the southwest and apparently downgradient of the Test Station.

**Status (July 22, 1987):** NYSERDA recently installed paired shallow and deep wells at seven locations around the site. Analyses confirmed contamination in both shallow and deep wells. The Luther Forest wells showed no contamination in September 1986.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at [ATSDR - ToxFAQs](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.