

Fact Sheet

July 2001

Hermiston Lab Site Umatilla County, Oregon

Hazardous Materials to be Removed from Lab Near Hermiston

This month, cleanup crews are expected to begin removing hazardous materials from an unoccupied laboratory three miles north of Hermiston, Oregon. The removal is necessary to reduce the risk to the public and the environment from the uncontrolled hazardous substances at this facility.

The laboratory is located in a light industrial area, next to the Daisy Milk processing and distribution facility, at 81156 N. Highway 395. The site, leased by the Capmartin Mining Laboratory, is no longer in operation. The operator, Mr. Earl Meyer, died a couple of months ago from heart failure.

The property owner, Mr. Bill Kik, has asked to conduct the cleanup. Mr. Kik has submitted a cleanup proposal to EPA for review and approval or disapproval. EPA is reviewing the plan for both thoroughness and competency. If the

plan is approved, work would begin in late July or in August under EPA oversight. If the plan is not approved, EPA will do the cleanup.

Currently, the site is fenced and secure, and appears to be stable. To reduce the chance of an accident, and to ensure that no material is taken from the site, EPA has hired and posted a security guard near the site.

The Cleanup

Wearing white protective suits, the site cleanup crew will come on scene near the end of July, or in early August, to identify and catalogue hazardous materials in and around the building. Then, materials will be sorted, packaged, and disposed of appropriately. Trucks will haul material off the site. It is expected to take about 14 days to complete the cleanup. All environmental and health concerns are expected to be addressed by this cleanup.



Photo left: Although inspectors found a variety of improperly stored chemicals, which present a hazard, the site is currently secure.

During the first inventory on June 8 and another more detailed inspection on June 27, inspectors found large quantities and varieties of chemicals at the site, including:

- 800 lbs. pelletized potassium cyanide;
- 8 55-gallon drums labeled caustic which are more likely acidic solutions;
- 16 5-gallon buckets of acid sludge;
- 20 1-gallon jugs of hydrochloric acid;
- 30 1-gallon jugs of sulfuric acid;
- 200 smaller laboratory-sized containers of various unknown chemicals;
- About 400 lbs. of marine type batteries;
- 8-10 PCB containers;
- Small amount of radioactive material;
- Brick of sodium metal suspended in drum of oil;
- Trash and debris;
- Soil contaminated with heavy metals;
- 30 1-gallon glass containers believed to contain a 78% solution of nitric acid; numerous other containers with unknown contents (assumed to be nitric acid);
- 11 boxes (with four 1-gallon bottles each) containing formic acid, sulfuric acid, and nitric acid;
- numerous glass containers include xylene and oxalic acid;
- surplus trailer containing obsolete electronic computer equipment;
- numerous vessels and vacuum tubes containing mercury.

Why Is Cleanup Needed?

After being notified of the site, and examining the site, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality requested EPA assistance. EPA inspected the site on June 8, and found chemicals stored in a haphazard manner with the high possibility of fire or explosion and chemical release. Of particular concern was the storage of cyanide compounds with various highly toxic acids. This combination could produce hydrogen cyanide, an extremely toxic gas.

Although fenced, the site was not secured against vandals or the curious, and it presented an imminent and substantial threat to public health and the environment.

Until the cleanup is complete, nearby residents and businesses are at risk of exposure from the chemicals, especially if there is a fire or explosion.



Photo above: Cleanup crews will catalogue, package, and dispose of hazardous materials.

**EPA Region 10 web site:
www.epa.gov/r10earth**

For More Information

Michael Sibley
On Scene Coordinator
206/553-1886 or 1-800-424-4372
e-mail: sibley.michael@epa.gov

Andrea Lindsay
Community Involvement Coordinator
206/553-1896 or 1-800-424-4372
e-mail: lindsay.andrea@epa.gov

An Administrative Record has been set up which contains a collection of documents related to site findings and cleanup decisions.

EPA Region 10
Seventh Floor Records Center
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101
(206) 553-4494

Documents also are available at:

Hermiston Library
235 E Gladys Avenue
Hermiston, OR 97838

To request additional services for persons with disabilities, call 1-800-424-4372.



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