



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 4  
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER  
61 FORSYTH STREET  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

**U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
\$250,000 EMERGENCY ACTION MEMORANDUM/INITIAL POLREP**

**DATE:** November 22, 2010

**SUBJECT:** NOTIFICATION OF \$250,000 ACTIVATION  
McLemore Street Mercury Release  
LaFayette, Walker County, Georgia

**FROM:** Matthew J. Huyser, On-Scene Coordinator  
Emergency Response and Removal Branch

**THRU:** Shane Hitchcock, Chief  
Emergency Response and Removal Branch

**TO:** Franklin E. Hill, Director - Superfund Division  
Regional Response Center, 4SF-ERRB  
GAEPD  
Lisa Boynton, EPA-HQ, Regional Coordinator  
Site File

<b>Site No:</b> B4D2	<b>Task Order No:</b>
<b>ERNS No:</b> None	<b>TO Amount:</b> \$50,000
<b>NPL Status:</b> Non-NPL	<b>Contractor:</b> Environmental Restoration
<b>CERCLIS No:</b> N/A	<b>Response Authority:</b> CERCLA
<b>State Notification:</b> 11/11/2010	<b>Start Date:</b> 11/12/2010
<b>Demobilization Date:</b> N/A	<b>Completion Date:</b> N/A

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this memorandum is to document the decision to initiate emergency response actions described herein for the McLemore Street Mercury Release, LaFayette, Walker County, Georgia pursuant to the On-Scene Coordinator's delegated authority under CERCLA Section 104.

**II. Site Information**

**A. Site Description**

Site Name: McLemore Street Mercury Release

Superfund Site ID (SSID): B4D2  
NRC Case Number: 959728  
CERCLIS Number: N/A  
Site Location: 909 McLemore Street, LaFayette, Georgia, 30728  
Lat/Long: N34°41'54.513" / W85°17'47.4936"  
Potentially Responsible Party (PRP): Tenant and LaFayette Housing Authority  
NPL Status: Non-NPL  
Removal Start Date: 11/13/2010

## **B. Site Background**

### *1. Removal Site Evaluation*

A release of mercury occurred at LaFayette High School on or before 10/20/2010 or 10/21/2010 when a student removed a container of mercury from the school's laboratory storage room without permission. The mercury was passed between a small group of 3-4 students and the container was stored in two or more book bags. Over the course of multiple days, the mercury was carried between the school and the students' home(s) and was eventually returned to the school faculty when the students were identified. School staff immediately utilized zinc and sulfur compounds along with pipettes to remove the spilled mercury. On 11/11/2010 staff discovered mercury beads in an unattached mobile classroom and attempted to contact EPA for assistance. EPA ERRB was notified of the incident on 11/12/2010 and mobilized OSC Huyser to respond, assess the extent of the release, and provide support to Walker County Schools.

On the afternoon of 11/12/2010, EPA and Walker County School staff measured the bottoms of the shoes of approximately 115 students (students that had utilized the affected classrooms) and approximately 95 staff. Eight pairs of shoes (four students and four staff) with mercury vapor readings in excess of 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> were removed, bagged, and placed in the sun to measure the confined area vapor levels. Of the eight pairs, one pair had a reading above 25,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> and two had readings in excess of 50,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>; the owners of the three pairs were advised that the shoes should be thrown away.

After the school had been vacated for the day, EPA conducted an initial screening of mercury vapor readings in several areas of the school and determined that Mobile Unit #2, Room 707, and 700 Boys Bathroom would have to be remediated for ongoing mercury vapor issues, in addition to disposal of the confiscated items in Room 604 storage closet. Administrative staff with Walker County Schools contacted environmental response contractor, Clean Harbors, who will begin work during the Thanksgiving holiday week (all impacted rooms will remain closed and isolated until that time).

On 11/12/2010 and 11/13/2010, EPA visited five residences whose occupants (students and faculty) may have come in close regular contact with the mercury. Three of the residences had no elevated readings of mercury vapor aside from low-level (<1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>) readings in three areas where shoes or book bags had sat. One residence had breathing air zone readings at approximately 1,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> and it was determined that further assessment would be necessary but no high level source was detected. The residence at 909 McLemore Street had elevated readings above 4,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> and several hotspots above 10,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>.

2. *Physical location and Site characteristics*

The residence is a one bedroom apartment in a low-income neighborhood. The property is owned and managed by the LaFayette Housing Authority (LHA). There is one elderly permanent resident, but there are two teenagers who stay and sleep at the apartment frequently.

3. *Release or threatened release into the environment of a hazardous substance, pollutant or contaminant*

The materials released, and those under a threat of release, to the environment are "pollutants or contaminants" as defined by section 101(33) of CERCLA. Analytical results obtained prior to disposal will determine whether any or all of the materials are, or contain, "hazardous substances" as defined by section 101(14) of CERCLA.

### **III. Threats to Public Health Welfare or the Environment**

#### **A. Nature of Actual or Threatened Release of Hazardous Substances, Pollutants or Contaminants.**

Mercury is a CERCLA hazardous substance that can be harmful to humans if ingested or inhaled; it readily vaporizes at room temperature and can easily be transported between locations where it can cross-contaminate indoor spaces or personal belongings. According to ATSDR ToxFAQs (March 2001): "Exposure to very high levels of metallic mercury vapor can cause brain, kidney, and lung damage and may seriously harm a developing fetus. Exposure to mercury vapor concentrations high enough to produce such serious effects might also cause coughing, chest pains, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, increases in blood pressure or heart rate, skin rashes, and eye irritation. Exposure to lower levels of airborne mercury for prolonged periods of time would produce more subtle effects, such as irritability, sleep disturbances, excessive shyness, tremors, coordination problems, changes in vision or hearing, and memory problems."

**B. Check applicable factors (from 40 CFR 300.415) which were considered in determining the appropriateness of a removal action:**

- Actual or potential exposure to nearby human populations, animals or the food chain from hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants [300.415(b)(2)(i)].
- Actual or potential contamination of drinking water supplies or sensitive ecosystems [300.415(b)(2)(ii)].
- Hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants in drums, barrels, tanks, or other bulk storage containers, that pose a threat of release [300.415(b)(2)(iii)].
- High levels of hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants in soils largely at or near the surface that may migrate [300.415(b)(2)(iv)].
- Weather conditions that may cause hazardous substances or pollutants to migrate or to be released [300.415(b)(2)(v)].
- Threat of fire or explosion [300.415(b)(2)(vi)].
- The availability of other appropriate federal or state response mechanisms to respond to the release [300.415(b)(2)(vii)].
- Other situations or factors that may pose threats to the public health or welfare of the United States or the environment [300.415(b)(2)(viii)].

**IV. Endangerment Determination under CERCLA Section 104: Pollutant or Contaminants**

Actual or threatened releases of pollutants and contaminants from this site, if not addressed by implementing the response action selected in this Action Memorandum, may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, or welfare, or the environment.

**V. Selected Removal Action and Estimated Costs**

**A. Situation and Removal Activities to Date**

*1. Current Situation*

The breathing space within the apartment at 909 McLamore Street contained mercury vapor levels consistently above 4,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> when doors and windows were closed and at an ambient temperature of approximately 75 °F. Hotspots of mercury vapors were found on a mop (>50,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>), a rug (18,000 ng/m<sup>3</sup>), a bag of clothes (12,500 ng/m<sup>3</sup>), the washing machine (20,100 ng/m<sup>3</sup>), a crack in the bedroom floor (8900 ng/m<sup>3</sup>) and the bathroom floor (8200 ng/m<sup>3</sup>). No mercury beads or elemental mercury was found in the apartment during screening. The tenant and occupants have temporarily moved out of the apartment and are living with family members during the course of removal activities.

## 2. *Removal activities to date*

### a. Federal Government/Private Party

EPA mobilized START and ERRS contractors to conduct assessment and removal activities. Initial activities began with overnight heating followed by intense ventilation of the apartment to determine whether mercury vapors had infiltrated into furniture and fabrics. Further activities will include systematically removing furniture from the apartment and vacuuming (with a mercury vacuum), removing, or decontaminating various hotspots to prevent further accumulation of mercury vapors. An 8-hour clearance test with a limit of 1000 ng/m<sup>3</sup> will be used to determine whether the apartment is appropriate for rehabilitation.

### b. State/local

GAEPD and local response agencies were notified of the release but did not deploy personnel during the time of the removal.

## 3. *Enforcement*

EPA contacted the LHA property manager on 11/12/2010 but was informed that the manager would be unavailable until 11/15/2010. EPA has been in close coordination with the tenant and with the LHA board of directors. An effort has initially been made, to the extent practicable, to determine whether they can and will perform the necessary removal action promptly and properly.

## **B. Planned Removal Actions**

### 1. *Proposed action description*

- i. Perform comprehensive assessment of mercury vapor and potential mercury sources in the home;
- ii. Segregate highly contaminated items for disposal;
- iii. Recover spilled elemental mercury, if found;
- iv. Heat and ventilate contaminated items, surfaces, and rooms, as necessary;
- v. Compile an inventory of items for disposal and provide reimbursement according to guidance documentation;
- vi. Provide for temporary relocation expenses according to guidance documentation;
- vii. Provide for analytical sampling of materials for disposal;
- viii. Provide for off-site disposal, treatment, and/or recycling of elemental mercury and mercury contaminated material; and,
- ix. Perform demolition, as necessary, to remove free mercury and providing for restoration of the associated damage where reasonably appropriate.

2. *Contribution to remedial performance*

The proposed actions will, to the extent practicable, contribute to the efficient performance of any long-term remedial action at the site.

3. *ARARs*

Removal actions conducted under CERCLA are required to attain ARARs to the extent practicable. In determining whether compliance with ARARs is practicable, the OSC may consider appropriate factors, including the urgency of the situation and the scope of the removal action to be conducted.

4. *Project Schedule*

The period of performance for the ERRS contractor has been set from 11/14/2010 to 11/13/2011.

**C. Estimated Costs\***

ERRS Costs	<b>\$180,000</b>
START Costs	<b>\$70,000</b>
<b>Total Removal Project Ceiling</b>	<b>\$250,000</b>

\*EPA direct and indirect costs, although cost recoverable, do not count toward the Removal Ceiling for this removal action. Liable parties may be held financially responsible for costs incurred by the EPA as set forth in Section 107 of CERCLA. "

**VI. Expected Change in the Situation Should Action Be Delayed or Not Taken**

A delay in action or no action at this Site would increase the actual or potential threats to the public health and/or the environment.

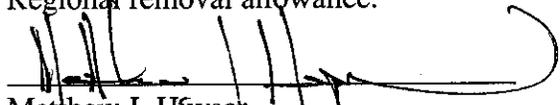
**VII. Outstanding Policy Issues**

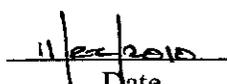
None

**VIII. Approvals**

This decision document represents the selected removal action for this Site, developed in accordance with CERCLA as amended, and not inconsistent with the National Contingency Plan. This decision is based on the administrative record for the Site.

Conditions at the site meet the NCP section 300.415(b) criteria for a removal action and through this document, I am approving the proposed removal actions. The total project ceiling is \$250,000, this amount will be funded from the Regional removal allowance.

  
Matthew J. Hüyser,  
Federal On-Scene Coordinator

  
Date

**IX. Endangerment Determination under CERCLA Section 106: Hazardous Substances**

“Actual or threatened releases of hazardous substances from this site may present an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, or welfare, or the environment.”

\_\_\_\_\_  
Shane Hitchcock, Chief  
Emergency Response and Removal Branch  
[Only in case of Endangerment Determination]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date