

Site Update Pride of the West Mill



Operational Period

May 23-24, 2021

Current Situation

On May 11, 2021, the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) inspected several structures at the former Pride of the West mill. This inspection identified numerous drums, bags, and containers in various states of integrity. In addition, an estimated 44 drums of sodium cyanide were discovered. Sodium cyanide reacts with acids and water to form hydrogen cyanide, a very toxic gas.

On May 17, 2021, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) notified EPA of their concern for unsecured chemicals at the Site and requested assistance.

EPA deployed a response team to the Site on May 21, 2021. That Team is currently conducting a removal evaluation at the Site. This removal evaluation is expected to be completed by May 28, 2021.

Site Description

The Pride of the West mill facility is located approximately four miles to the northeast and upstream of Silverton, Colorado along the Animas River. The mill facility is not in operation and consists of several structures situated within a steep river valley along Animas Forks Rd/Rt. 2.

Site Objectives

- Safety of the public and response personnel is top priority.
- Assess and stabilize the source area to prevent the incident from worsening.
- Minimize or, if possible, eliminate threats to human health and/or the environment posed by the release/discharge.
- Provide timely and accurate communication of response information to the public, on-site media, and affected stakeholders.

Safety Message

EPA will adhere to all CDC and local recommendations pertaining to COVID-19 during the site work.

All relevant safety precautions will be followed when conducting the assessment of unknown drums/containers. Many containers are reported to be corrosive and are leaking. Possible

Asbestos Containing Material was noted in at least two buildings (with at least one building reported to have damaged/flaking material).

Operational Period Objectives

EPA's Operational Objectives from May 23-24, 2021 were to:

1. Complete initial entries into all buildings.
2. Complete inventory of drums and containers in Leach Plant and Laboratory.
3. Initiate hazard classification tests of unknown chemicals to inform disposal.

Current Activities

An initial entry was conducted on the Office/Shop. Several small chemical containers of note were identified on a core logging work station (HCL, NaOH) and cupboard (HCL). EPA also conducted an initial entry of a nearby Quonset building and identified no concerning chemical containers.

EPA completed the inventory of containers and drums in the Leach Plant and Laboratory. The response team documented container type, size, condition, and any label information. A total of 49 containers were inventoried in the Leach Plant and 224 containers were inventoried in the Lab as of May 24.

EPA completed a Hazard Classification of 42 unknown chemicals.

Planned Activities

1. Complete inventory all drums and containers in the Mill Building and Office/Shop.
2. Segregate drums and containers within each building according to compatible chemical properties (acids vs bases for example).
3. Determine the contents of drums and containers using existing labels to the extent practical and obtain relevant safety documentation from manufactures.
4. Continue sampling containers with unknown contents.
5. Perform Hazard Classification analyses to determine the properties and compatibility of those drums or containers with unknown or questionable contents.

The next Site Update will be distributed on May 28, 2021.