

Site Update Pride of the West Mill



Operational Period

June 22-23, 2021

Current Situation

On May 11, 2021, the Colorado Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) conducted an inspection at the Pride of the West Mill related to the DRMS's statutory obligation to complete reclamation at the previously permitted mill facility. This inspection identified numerous drums, bags, and containers in various states of integrity.

On May 20, 2021, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) notified EPA of their concern for unsecured chemicals at the Site and requested assistance.

An EPA response team conducted an evaluation of the Site between May 21-28, 2021. The team identified hazardous substances, pollutants or contaminants in numerous abandoned drums and containers. Many of these drums and containers are compromised and leaking.

EPA deployed a response team to the Site on June 21, 2021 and is currently removing and packaging drums and containers for disposal in the Leach Plant, Mill Building and Laboratory.

Site Description

The Pride of the West mill facility is located several 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.
- Maintain site security to eliminate trespassing and public exposure.
- Minimize or, if possible, eliminate threats to human health and/or the environment posed by chemicals in the drums and containers.
- Remove, secure and properly dispose of abandoned containers containing hazardous substances as well as pollutants or contaminants.
- 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 removal and disposal of all drums and containers. Many containers are corroding and leaking.

Operational Period Objectives

Kicking off the removal phase of the project on June 22 and June 23, 2021, several key objectives were identified for the first two days, including:

- Orient staff and crew to site layout and establish safety protocols for the removal process.
- Designate work zones by marking the exclusion zone (work zone), the decontamination zone, and the support zone with physical fencing barriers.
- Begin staging and removing drums and containers from the Leach Plant, Mill Building, and Laboratory for proper disposal.

Current Activities

The EPA removal team has established the work zones and the safety procedures required for the removal process. Work zones have been fenced off and the team has been focused on clearing old mining equipment and debris to create pathways through the three buildings to allow for safe access to the various containers and drums throughout the three buildings. The team is also in the process of clearing several docking areas in the Mill Building to create the container consolidation/staging areas. One drum of sodium cyanide was packaged and removed from a Mill Building docking zone as part of the staging area clearance process. Having created safe passage inside the Leach Plant, Mill Building, and the Laboratory and with staging areas cleared of all potential hazards, the team will begin the process of removing drums and containers from all three buildings.

Planned Activities

In the next phase of the removal process, the team will be removing drums and containers of different types of waste using the following process:

- Maintaining temporary staging and bulking areas at the Mill Building.
- Overpacking and removing high risk containers and drums.
- Collecting and consolidating drums and containers of chemicals from the Leach Plant, Mill Building, and Laboratory.
- Packaging drums and containers for proper disposal.

EPA will distribute the next Site Update on June 25, 2021.