

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IV
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Tuesday, August 18, 2009

From: Rick Jardine

To: Ted Jackson, GA EPD

Matt Taylor, USEPA R4 ERRB

Subject: Interim Action

Brenau University Mercury Spill

615 Washington ST. SE, Gainesville, GA

Latitude: 34.3026389

Longitude: -83.8213889

POLREP No.:	2	Site #:	B422
Reporting Period:	Monday 8/17/2009	D.O. #:	
Start Date:	8/14/2009	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	8/14/2009	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

On or about Monday August 10th, the removal of a mercury-containing device along with worthless debris from a science lab at Brenau University (Brenau) resulted in a release of mercury to the floor and along the route to the garbage pen at the NW corner of the building. EQ conducted the initial stabilization of much of the visible mercury.

During the morning of Monday August 17, 2009, John Keller of Brenau contacted OSC Jardine requesting that EPA conduct the appropriate removal action at the Science Building at 615 Washington Street. Mr. Keller identified timeliness and availability of resources as essential to the response since classes are scheduled to begin Monday August 24th.

Current Activities

OSC Jardine mobilized ERRS contractor ER and START consultant TTEMI to the site to begin the emergency removal action.

Initial actions were to begin venting the contaminated areas, i.e. west stairwell, 2nd story corridor, lab room 22 and closet. Heat from a torpedo heater was also applied to the west stairwell to supplement venting.

The venting process provided an engineering control to enhance the safety of the workers plus those few college staff and administrators who needed limited access to the building during the day. EPA vented the lab, closet, and corridors in addition to many rooms that were not directly affected by the spill. Early in this spill history, internal HVAC systems migrated mercury vapors throughout the building. The venting removed ambient mercury vapors that previously had been stagnant and were potentially adhering to the porous materials throughout the building.

During the venting operation, ERRS removed small porous items such as cardboard and styrafoam display boards from the room. These items were bagged and heated outdoors for assessment.

After preparing the room, ER conducted a methodical mercury vacuum treatment of every accessible square inch of floor space within the lab and closet. ER observed numerous mercury beads during this process. Air screening indicated that additional mercury had likely become entrapped in the spaces between tiles and under some tiles that had puckered. Free mercury was also determined to be beneath the vinyl base molding. Both suspect tile and vinyl base were removed and the floor beneath mercury vacuumed. All intrusive activity was conducted in Level C personal protective equipment.

ERRS set up the lab, corridor, and both stairwells for an active cool venting for the entire night.

Planned Removal Actions

On Tuesday EPA plans to screen the entire building to determine relative gains, remove any additional materials as necessary, continue with heat and vent tactics and begin chemical washing of mercury contact surfaces.

Key Issues

During the workday the professor who caused the release while cleaning up the lab closet, came by the building to retrieve some medicine from his office. OSC Jardine interviewed him and determined that the path from room 22 to the garbage pen was as EPA theorized (leave lab turn left down the hall and descend the west stairwell. START screened his car to determine whether any residual mercury was remaining. The levels were below EPA R4 removal action levels.

Also the professor stated that his normal workload placed him in the lab 4 times per week - two labs and two classroom sessions. He will have two such classes. Therefore, he expects to be in room 22 for approximately twelve hours each week and his students should be in room 22 six hours per week.

Estimated Costs *

	Budgeted	Total To Date	Remaining	% Remaining
Extramural Costs				
ERRS - Cleanup Contractor	\$80,000.00	\$6,000.00	\$74,000.00	92.50%
TAT/START	\$10,000.00	\$3,000.00	\$7,000.00	70.00%
Intramural Costs				
USEPA - Direct	\$5,000.00	\$1,500.00	\$3,500.00	70.00%
Total Site Costs	\$95,000.00	\$10,500.00	\$84,500.00	88.95%

* The above accounting of expenditures is an estimate based on figures known to the OSC at the time this report was written. The OSC does not necessarily receive specific figures on final payments made to any contractor(s). Other financial data which the OSC must rely upon may not be entirely up-to-date. The cost accounting provided in this report does not necessarily represent an exact monetary figure which the government may include in any claim for cost recovery.

response.epa.gov/BrenauUniversityMercurySpill

POLREP #2 Last Updated 8/19/2009