

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
Oglethorpe County High School Mercury Spill - Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region IV

Subject: POLREP #2
Oglethorpe County High School Mercury Spill
B451
Lexington, GA
Latitude: 33.8845294 Longitude: -83.1249189

To: Matt Taylor, USEPA R4 ERRB

From: Randy Nattis, On-Scene Coordinator

Date: 12/14/2009

Reporting Period: Decemeber 13 - Decemeber 14, 2009

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:	B451	Contract Number:	
D.O. Number:		Action Memo Date:	
Response Authority:	CERCLA	Response Type:	Emergency
Response Lead:	PRP	Incident Category:	Removal Action
NPL Status:	Non NPL	Operable Unit:	
Mobilization Date:	12/11/2009	Start Date:	12/11/2009
Demob Date:		Completion Date:	
CERCLIS ID:		RCRIS ID:	
ERNS No.:		State Notification:	
FPN#:		Reimbursable Account #:	

1.1.1 Incident Category

Other - High School

1.1.2 Site Description

1.1.2.1 Location

Oglethorpe County High School is located in Lexington, Oglethorpe County, Georgia, approximately 20 miles east of Athens, GA (33.889 longitude, -83.138 latitude). The school services the entire county, with approximately 700 students. Oglethorpe County Middle School is attached to the high school. It is located in a rural area, with some commercial enterprises in the vicinity.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

On December 10, 2009, a student reportedly brought a copenhagen container full of elemental mercury to school. The material was spilled in a computer classroom. Elemental mercury is a naturally occurring metal which is a liquid at room temperature. Mercury is not readily absorbed into the human body by ingestion or touch, but it produces vapors at room temperature which can be harmful to human health if inhaled. Exposure to high levels of mercury vapor can cause damage to the brain, kidneys and lungs, and may cause severe damage to a developing fetus.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Not applicable due to emergency response.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

School Removal Activities

Room419: USES removed the computer equipment from the room and staged it in on plastic sheeting in

Room 421: USES wiped down all of the tables with CS102 solution, then removed the tables from the room and staged them on plastic sheeting in the parking lot outside. The source room and Room 421 where the computer equipment is staged are currently being vented.

Room 510: USES is in the process of removing the floor tiles.

Student Screening

Students who were in either Room 419 or 510 during the spills collected by school officials during normal school hours and were transported to the Agricultural Center on school grounds and interviewed regarding their exposure to the mercury. Students were asked:

- Do you have Mercury; if so, where is it and did you give it to anyone else? Who?
- Did you touch or play with the Mercury? If so, what did you do?
- If so, how did you get to and from school last Friday (12/11/09)?
- Did you wear these shoes to school last Thursday
- Is this the same backpack that you had last Thursday? If not, where is the backpack from last Thursday?
- Did you wear any of these clothes to school last Thursday (hat, jacket)? If not, where are they?

Any items that the students had with them when the mercury was spilled were screened. The students were also given a fact sheet on Mercury.

Bagged items were heated in a tent before screening. Items were screened with the Lumex and readings were written on a screening log for each student. Any item that exceeded 4,000 ng/m3 was confiscated and itemized. All students with items confiscated were inventoried. OSC Nattis briefed the students and will, with the assistance with Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) Sherry Carbonaro and START contractor Tetra Tech, brief the parents and arrange for further assessment of the student's residence.

- 65 total students were screened
- 52 students had non elevated items that were returned to them
- 13 students had elevated items that were confiscated

Residential Screening

Three residences have been screened to date. EPA gained access to the source residence and it will be screened at 8 am on 12/15/09. The residences of students that came into contact with the mercury will be screened. The residences of students that had items that screened above 4000 ng/m3 will also be screened. So far, a total of 17 homes will be screened.

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

- Assess extent of migration of mercury;
- Ensure safety of response and facility personnel;
- Conduct oversight of removal activities; and,
- Support removal activities with air monitoring and technical assistance where needed.

USES will begin the heating and venting process for Room 419 and Room 421 (Staged Computer Equipment). The removal of the floor tile will begin in Room 419, and then the room will be vacuumed. Once the floor tiles have been removed in Room 510, the room will be vacuumed.

START will begin residential screening including the source residence at 0800.

OSC Nattis, CIC and representatives from ATSDR will hold a press conference at 6 pm on 12/15/09 that will be followed by an Availability Session from 7 pm to 10 pm for parents and students.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Potentially impacted houses will continue to be assessed for mercury vapor contamination.

The Environmental Clean-Up Contractor will continue to remediate the impacted areas.

2.3 Logistics Section

There are no logistical concerns for this response.

2.4 Finance Section

2.4.1 Narrative

The Oglethorpe County School System hired the clean-up contractor to conduct the remediation.

Estimated Costs *

		Total To		%
--	--	-----------------	--	----------

	Budgeted	Date	Remaining	Remaining
Extramural Costs				
TAT/START	\$40,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$24,000.00	60.00%
Intramural Costs				
Total Site Costs	\$40,000.00	\$16,000.00	\$24,000.00	60.00%

* 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.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

EPA Removal Action Level for mercury vapors in schools is 3,000 ng/m³. Any areas with peak values over 3,000 ng/m³ are being remediated. Clearance will be conducted by monitoring selected locations with the Lumex for 6 consecutive hours.

EPA Removal Action Level for mercury vapors in private residences is 1,000 ng/m³.

EPA will conduct residential assessments if student's personal items are greater 4,000 ng/m³ or if the student came in contact with the Mercury, which was determined by the school nurse or during the interviews during the student screening.

All assessment activities were conducted in Level D PPE with booties and gloves. Protocol was in place to elevate to Level C PPE in the event that vapors in the breathing zone area exceeded 25,000 ng/mg.

2.6 Liaison Officer

The OSC is serving as the Liaison Officer in this response. To date, coordination has been between school and GEMA officials.

2.7 Information Officer

2.7.1 Public Information Officer

The CIC is serving as the PIO for this response. ATSDR fact sheets were provided to the school and potentially impacted families. The OSC, CIC and the school superintendent are working together to ensure that accurate and appropriate information is adequately communicated with the public.

2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator

Community Involvement Coordinators, Sherryl Carbonaro mobilized to site at 1200 on 12/14/09 and is currently working with the school superintendent to get out a press release and set up a availability meeting tomorrow evening (12/15/09).

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

At this time no Unified Command exists. The school system hired a competent and able environmental contractor to perform the remediation. EPA is serving in an oversight and technical support role.

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

Not applicable

4. Personnel On Site

EPA OSC (1)
EOA CIC (1)
START Contractor TetraTech EMI, Inc. (6)

5. Definition of Terms

No information available at this time.

6. Additional sources of information

No information available at this time.

7. Situational Reference Materials

No information available at this time.

