

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 #4
Oglethorpe County High School Mercury Spill
B451
Lexington, GA
Latitude: 33.8845294 Longitude: -83.1249189

To:
From: Randy Nattis, On-Scene Coordinator
Date: 12/16/2009
Reporting Period: December 16, 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

Room 419: USES has collected all visible Mercury and have finished removing all the floor tiles. USES will collect and bag the remaining debris using mercury vacuums and begin a rigorous heating and venting cycle using Oil fired portable torpedo heaters and barrel fans throughout the night.

Room 421: Computer equipment from Room 419 are staged and currently being vented. All lumex surveys are showing less than 100 ng/m3.

Room 510: USES has applied 1 coating of sealant to encase any residual Mercury in place to begin clearance of room. Initial Lumux survey post coat of sealant are showing less than 100 ng/m3 in the breathing zone.

Student Screening

No additional Student Screening took place during this reporting period.

Residential Screening

A total of 14 homes have been screen to date (3 for this reporting period - correction for yesterday's sitrep 8 homes screened during that reporting period). To date, 3 residents have denied access. Additional items have been collected from screened homes for personal item clean-up activities.

Personal Items

START began itemizing all personal items with elevated screening results (4000 ng/m3+) for heating and venting in order to removal any residual Mercury vapors. What clears will be returned to the owner, items that do not clear will be inventoried and documented for reimbursement.

Community Outreach

EPA, including the OSC, CIC and ERRS (WRS) have started the reimbursement process for residents with contaminated items not cleared. To date, EPA has replaced 1 mattress and 1 washing machine.

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 continue remedial activities in room 419 and room 510

START will continue residential screening and clearing of personal items collected during the student and residential screening. START is maintaining a site-wide database and document management system

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

Plan for returning all cleared items and conduct clearance activities of both Room 510 and Room 419

2.3 Logistics Section

There are no logistical concerns for this response.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

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. Any readings above 50,000 ng/m3 will require a back out and a PPE upgrade to Level B

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

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

Bob Safay and Rich Nickle from ATSDR are on standby but remain in Atlanta.

4. Personnel On Site

EPA OSC (1)

EPA CIC (1)

START Contractor TetraTech EMI, Inc. (5)

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.