

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT  
El Paso County Metals Survey - Removal Polrep  
Initial and Final Removal Polrep



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
Region VI

**Subject:** POLREP #1  
Final POLREP  
El Paso County Metals Survey  
LP  
El Paso, TX  
Latitude: 31.7815720 Longitude: -106.5239740

**To:**  
**From:** Jon Rinehart, OSC  
**Date:** 10/4/2010  
**Reporting Period:** July 2001-October 2009

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

<b>Site Number:</b>	LP	<b>Contract Number:</b>	
<b>D.O. Number:</b>		<b>Action Memo Date:</b>	7/10/2002
<b>Response Authority:</b>	CERCLA	<b>Response Type:</b>	Time-Critical
<b>Response Lead:</b>	EPA	<b>Incident Category:</b>	Removal Action
<b>NPL Status:</b>	Non NPL	<b>Operable Unit:</b>	
<b>Mobilization Date:</b>	11/1/2002	<b>Start Date:</b>	11/1/2002
<b>Demob Date:</b>	10/15/2009	<b>Completion Date:</b>	10/30/2009
<b>CERCLIS ID:</b>	TX0000605388	<b>RCRIS ID:</b>	
<b>ERNS No.:</b>		<b>State Notification:</b>	TCEQ
<b>FPN#:</b>		<b>Reimbursable Account #:</b>	

#### 1.1.1 Incident Category

Time-critical removal action

#### 1.1.2 Site Description

El Paso County Metals Survey Site is located on the west and central side of the City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas and the east side of Sunland Park, Dona Ana County, New Mexico. This portion of El Paso and Sunland Park was impacted by activities of the former ASARCO (American Smelting and Refining Company) copper smelter. This smelter began operation in 1886 as a lead smelter. It was later converted to a copper smelter. Air emissions from the operation of this plant has impacted the soil on residential properties in El Paso, Texas and Sunland Park, New Mexico.

Soil sampling data that was collected by graduate students from the University of Texas-El Paso (UTEP) and the Texas Air Control Board was provided to EPA by Texas Air Control Board by Texas State Senator Eliot Shapleigh. This information indicated elevated levels of heavy metals primarily arsenic and lead in the soil in the vicinity of the smelter.

EPA conducted a removal assessment to replicate the sampling information that was provided. This data collected by EPA indicated that there were elevated arsenic and lead levels in the residential soils.

##### 1.1.2.1 Location

The El Paso County Metals Survey Site is located in west central El Paso, El Paso County, Texas and Sunland Park, Dona Ana County, New Mexico. Geographic coordinates of the site are 31.781572 degrees North Latitude and -106.523974 degrees West Longitude. This site is located in residential areas.

##### 1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

Elevated levels of arsenic and lead were identified in residential soils in west central El Paso and eastern Sunland Park. These levels were above the Region 6 Residential Screening Levels. The initial screening level for arsenic was 24 ppm, but was changed to 46 ppm after the results of the bioavailability study was completed. The screening level is now 46 ppm for arsenic and 500 ppm for lead.

##### 1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

The El Paso County Metals Survey (Site) extends throughout the central and west side of the City of El Paso, El Paso County, Texas. The Site has a significant number of lots with homes currently in use as dwellings, while a small number of lots are vacant.

Several previous investigations have been conducted to determine if high concentrations of metals are prevalent in soils throughout the west side of the City of El Paso. These investigations have been conducted by the former Texas Air Control Board (TACB) and numerous environmental investigations associated with individual master theses from students at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). These investigations identified elevated concentrations of metals in soils throughout areas of west El Paso.

Based on these early investigations and a request from the local officials the EPA conducted an initial soil and air sampling investigation of El Paso schools and parks during July 2001, to determine if the data from UTEP was reproducible. Based on the results of the soil screening and air sampling, the EPA determined that several areas warranted further investigation.

On July 10, 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 Superfund Division Director signed the first Time Critical Action Memorandum (AM) for the El Paso County Metals Survey Site. This AM proposed to remove/excavate contaminated arsenic and/or lead soils found on residential properties exceeding established screening levels of 24 ppm for arsenic and 500 ppm for lead, restore the property to the condition it was prior to the removal and arrange for the off-site disposal of the removed soils. Upon completion and review of the arsenic bioavailability study, performed by the University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri, the arsenic clean up level was increased from 24 ppm to 46 ppm. On March 20, 2003, EPA Headquarters signed the second Time Critical AM which increased the total project ceiling beyond the \$2 million statutory limitation and an exemption to the 12-month time limit for a Removal Action. The second AM increased the removal ceiling to \$6 million.

The EPA funded portion of the Removal Action started in November 2002, and a total of 504 properties had been excavated and fully restored to pre excavation conditions. Of the 504 properties, 315 properties were excavated and restored with the \$6 million of EPA funds, 75 properties were excavated and restored with the \$1million EPA received from the Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 ASARCO Trust Fund and 114 properties were excavated and restored with the \$1 million EPA received from the FY 2004 ASARCO Trust Fund.

On March 25, 2005, EPA issued a Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO) to ASARCO addressing the removal response activities at the Site. The UAO required ASARCO to conduct removal actions described in the UAO to abate an imminent and substantial endangerment to public health, welfare or the environment that maybe presented by the actual or threatened release of hazardous substances from the site.

On June 22, 2005, ASARCO sent EPA a letter in response to the UAO stating that ASARCO intends to comply with the UAO.

On July 29, 2005, OSC Fisher sent ASARCO comments to the Draft Residential Removal Action Work Plan (RAWP) Revision 2 and the Health and Safety Plan (HASP) Revision 1.0 dated July 19, 2005.

June 2005, ASARCO entered into a UAO with the EPA. The UAO required ASARCO to conduct the removal work for the remainder of the identified residential properties. Soil sampling of the residential properties was conducted by the EPA and its contractors from 2001 to 2008. Based on the laboratory analytical results for the samples collected, total lead and/or arsenic concentrations in soil for numerous properties located throughout a portion of the central and west side of the city exceeded the site action levels of 500 mg/kg for lead and/or 46 mg/kg for arsenic.

Mobilization and site preparation activities associated with the the removal action were initiated in August 2005, July 2006, June 2007, August 2008, and October 2009. After the removal activities were completed by ASARCO with EPA oversight the crews were demobilized December 2005, November 2006, October 2007, November 2008, and October 2009.

The removal activities that were completed by EPA and by the PRP ASARCO totaled 1,064 residential properties that were excavated and restored in El Paso. There were 25 residential properties that were excavated and restored in Sunland Park. There were a total of 3,778 residential properties that were sampled in El Paso and Sunland Park.

## 2. Current Activities

### 2.1 Operations Section

#### 2.1.1 Narrative

NA

#### 2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

NA

#### 2.1.3 Enforcement Activities, Identity of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs)

ASARCO has been identified as the PRP.

#### 2.1.4 Progress Metrics

<i><b>Waste Stream</b></i>	<i><b>Medium</b></i>	<i><b>Quantity</b></i>	<i><b>Manifest #</b></i>	<i><b>Treatment</b></i>	<i><b>Disposal</b></i>

## **2.2 Planning Section**

### **2.2.1 Anticipated Activities**

None

### **2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities**

None

### **2.2.1.2 Next Steps**

None

### **2.2.2 Issues**

None

## **2.3 Logistics Section**

NA

## **2.4 Finance Section**

No information available at this time.

## **2.5 Other Command Staff**

### **2.5.1 Safety Officer**

NA

### **2.6 Liaison Officer**

NA

### **2.7 Information Officer**

#### **2.7.1 Public Information Officer**

NA

#### **2.7.2 Community Involvement Coordinator**

Donn Walters

## **3. Participating Entities**

### **3.1 Unified Command**

### **3.2 Cooperating Agencies**

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, New Mexico Environment Department, New Mexico Border Health Department, Texas State Department Health Services, and Agency for Toxic Services and Disease Registry were all assisting agencies.

## **4. Personnel On Site**

NA

## **5. Definition of Terms**

NA

## **6. Additional sources of information**

### **6.1 Internet location of additional information/report**

NA

### **6.2 Reporting Schedule**

NA

## **7. Situational Reference Materials**

NA