U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
POLLUTION/SITUATION REPORT
John Day Vapor Response - Removal Polrep

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Region X

Subject: **POLREP #2**
Response Update
John Day Vapor Response

John Day, OR
Latitude: 44.4118110 Longitude: -118.9529053

To:
From: Brooks Stanfield, On Scene Coordinator
Date: 5/25/2015
Reporting Period: 5/22/15 - 5/25/15

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Site Number:		**Contract Number:**	
D.O. Number:		**Action Memo Date:**	
Response Authority:	CERCLA	**Response Type:**	Emergency
Response Lead:	EPA	**Incident Category:**	Removal Assessment
NPL Status:	Non NPL	**Operable Unit:**	
Mobilization Date:	5/21/2015	**Start Date:**	5/20/2015
Demob Date:		**Completion Date:**	
CERCLIS ID:	ORN001001391	**RCRIS ID:**	
ERNS No.:		**State Notification:**	ODEQ
FPN#:		**Reimbursable Account #:**	

1.1.1 Incident Category

Emergency Response

1.1.2 Site Description

The site consists of an approximately 1/2 mile long and 2-block wide area of residences, a church, and some light commercial businesses, located on the south side of the city of John Day. The site runs parallel to, and along S. Canyon Blvd (U.S. Hwy 395) and Canyon Creek. Residences include single and multi-family homes and rental properties.

Canyon Creek is reported to be a migratory pathway for salmon and steelhead trout. Further, Canyon Creek flows into the John Day River within approximately 3/4 mile of the site. The John Day River is a significant river in eastern Oregon noted for its steelhead trout and salmon runs, Bull trout habitat, smallmouth bass fishery, and recreational activities. It is also used for irrigation by farms and ranches along its length.

1.1.2.1 Location

John Day, Grant County, Oregon.

1.1.2.2 Description of Threat

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), including hexane, benzene, ethylbenzene, xylenes, 2-methylbutane, pentane, butane, hexane, cyclohexane, 3- and 2-methylhexane, heptane, isobutene, and methylcyclohexane have been detected in a vapors that are believed to be releasing from an unknown groundwater plume into at least 20 homes, some commercial properties, and into the environment.

1.1.3 Preliminary Removal Assessment/Removal Site Inspection Results

Preliminary air monitoring activities have taken place in approximately 50 homes and businesses over the past 4 days. As of the afternoon on Monday May 25, approximately 10 homes remained unscreened due to absent homeowners or vacancy. Initial air monitoring activities helped inform the EPA team that eight occupied homes were most impacted by VOCs. Screening results, along with actions taken by residents themselves to reduce vapor levels in their homes, helped guide the team in sharing with residents what mitigating steps they could take as a precautionary measure while we await more definitive laboratory

results.

2. Current Activities

2.1 Operations Section

2.1.1 Narrative

In mid-May 2015, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) requested assistance from EPA in response to numerous reports of unusual odors in and around homes and commercial buildings along South Canyon Boulevard in John Day, Oregon. The problem initially began in February and early March, 2015, at the USDA and State Soil Conservation Service building, where employees noticed strong odors and health effects such as headaches, irritated eyes and sore throats. The Service then hired a consultant to investigate the odors and their source in the building. The consultant's investigation revealed unusually high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the building and crawl space. Similar complaints from residents in the same area began surfacing in early May. The City of John Day began investigating the problem, hired a consultant to test indoor air at a home and the local library, and then contacted the ODEQ for assistance. Similar results (elevated VOCs) were found in both locations, and that more extensive air monitoring for vapors may be needed. Specific VOCs of concern include chemicals such as hexane, benzene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes.

2.1.2 Response Actions to Date

EPA On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) Franklin and Stanfield, along with EPA START contractors, mobilized to the site and arrived on scene May 21, 2015. EPA met with the City Manager, Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Manager of Public Works to obtain an understanding of the history and take a tour of the affected area of town. EPA then set up a command post in an old Fire Department administration building, and immediately began conducting door-to-door air monitoring in order to determine the extent and general levels of vapors. After initial results by the EPA team indicated high levels of VOCs in basements and crawl spaces, and releases of VOCs to the outside air, OSC Franklin then mobilized additional START resources (Mobile R10 Lab) and air monitoring equipment (HAPSITE GC/MS) to further assist and investigate the problem. OSC Franklin also requested an EPA Community Involvement Coordinator (CIC) and Public Affairs specialist mobilize to the site. CIC Judy Smith mobilized to the site and arrived late in the evening.

On May 22, EPA teams continued with air monitoring activities in area homes and commercial structures. The second air monitoring START teams arrived at the site and began integrating into site activities. Public Affairs and CIC specialist Judy Smith met with the John Day City manager, and began preparing site fact sheets for the public, as well as contacting and briefing County and State Health Departments. and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs reservation.

On May 24, we continued initial air screening at residential homes and prepared a flyer asking absent residents to contact us when they returned so a screening visit could be arranged.

Additionally EPA OSC Stanfield consulted with other EPA responders and EPA toxicologist, Julie Wroble, to review data and establish an interim screening level for total VOCs at 5,000 parts per billion. EPA began identifying the homes exceeding this level and advising these residents on precautionary mitigating steps that were already proving to be effective at several nearby homes. Follow-up air monitoring indicating these short-term measures were reducing VOC levels dramatically.

On May 25, we continued initial screening of residences, conducted follow-up visits of homes initially exceeding screening levels to confirm effectiveness of mitigation measures, and technicians began collecting the first air samples that would be sent for laboratory analysis. The field team began making preparations for groundwater sampling starting Tuesday.

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

Although several potential commercial businesses and sources in the area have been identified in the immediate area, no specific PRPs have been identified. Investigation activities into source and PRPs continue.

2.1.4 Progress Metrics

Waste Stream	*Medium*	*Quantity*	*Manifest #*	*Treatment*	*Disposal*

2.2 Planning Section

2.2.1 Anticipated Activities

Air sampling through May 27, and groundwater sampling starting May 26, possibly spanning a few days. Air monitoring activities will continue into the week to ensure interim mitigating measures are keeping VOC levels down in homes and businesses.

2.2.1.1 Planned Response Activities

EPA and START teams will continue air monitoring and investigation activities to determine the lateral extent and magnitude of the problem, and will focus on identifying specific VOC compounds using the HAPSITE GC/MS instrument. Sampling of indoor air and groundwater at several site is planned for the week of May 25, 2015.

CIC Judy Smith will continue address public concerns and distributing site fact sheets. A radio interview with the local radio station KJDY is anticipated to take place the week of May 25.

2.2.1.2 Next Steps

PIO Judy Smith will continue coordinating community outreach activities including a second interview with the local newspaper - The Blue Mountain Eagle - as well as a second interview with the local radio station KJDY.

On May 26, EPA representatives plan to brief local and state partners regarding progress in lowering fume levels in homes and identifying a source. Members of the EPA team plan to attend Tuesday evening's City Council meeting in John Day at 7am to speak with councilmembers and members of the community.

2.2.2 Issues

Ongoing release and high levels of VOCs to some residential and commercial structures and environment from subsurface and/or groundwater.

Undetermined source.

Potential public health threat and surface water.

2.3 Logistics Section

Logistical support and Command Post provided by City of John Day as well as many private citizens in the community.

2.4 Finance Section

No information available at this time.

2.5 Other Command Staff

2.5.1 Safety Officer

EPA
EPA START Contractor

2.5.2 Liaison Officer

Judy Smith, EPA CIC and Public Information Officer

2.5.3 Information Officer

Judy Smith, EPA CIC and Public Information Officer

3. Participating Entities

3.1 Unified Command

City of John Day, Oregon
Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
U.S. EPA Region 10, Oregon Operations Office

3.2 Cooperating Agencies

Oregon State Public Health Department
Grant County Health Department

4. Personnel On Site

EPA On-Scene Coordinator
EPA Community Involvement Coordinator/Public Information Officer
EPA Superfund Technical Assessment and Response Team (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.