

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IV
POLLUTION REPORT

Date: Friday, May 26, 2006

From: Chris Russell

Subject: Update

Oak Grove Elementary Mercury Spill
3801 Wake Forest Hwy, Durham, NC
Latitude: 35.9814000
Longitude: -78.8208000

POLREP No.:	2	Site #:	A4LS
Reporting Period:	5/24/06 - 5/26/06	D.O. #:	
Start Date:	5/24/2006	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	5/24/2006	Response Type:	Emergency
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	Non NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:		Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

On the evening of May 23, 2006, a parent noticed elemental mercury on their child's clothes. In turn, the parent contacted the Poison Control Center for advice. The Poison Control Center then contacted the Durham County Public Health Department (DCPHD), which immediately started an investigation into the source of the mercury. DCPHD discovered that an individual had stolen approximately 10 pounds of elemental mercury and that this individual had taken the mercury to a Church service and dispersed it to four children. At least one of these children took the mercury to the Oak Grove Elementary School and proceeded to "spray" other kids, the school bus, etc. with the mercury. On May 24th, Ms. Luanne Williams, Toxicologist, NC State Health Dept. contacted EPA Region 4 and requested assistance with the investigation and cleanup of the mercury contamination. EPA assessed and monitored 27 separate locations (25 residences, 1 Church, 1 School). Of the 27 locations, 18 sites needed active removal actions (including the school and Church), ranging from the removal of contaminated clothes, to the removal of floors, walls, etc.

EPA worked in a Unified Command with the Durham County Emergency Management Agency, and the Durham County Public Health Department. Durham PD, Durham County Sheriff's Office, State of NC EMA, and the NC State Health Dept. also integrated into the established ICS structure.

Current Activities

EPA is operating in a Unified Command with the Durham County EMA and the Durham County Public Health Unit.

During this reporting period, EPA has assessed thirteen residences, one school, and one Church. Assessments are on-going at this time.

Planned Removal Actions

EPA has tasked ERRS CMC, INC. to mobilize to Durham, NC to support this operation. CMC, Inc. will be on-site late this afternoon.

Currently, EPA has targeted two residences that will be decontaminated with EPA as the lead. Two other residences will be decontaminated by the property owners and their contractors. EPA will provide oversight for these residences. Furthermore, the Durham County Board of Education has retained a cleanup contractor to address Oak Grove Elementary School. EPA will provide oversight of this operation as well.

Next Steps

Continue working with the established Unified Command to address identified objectives.

Continue assessments and move into removal actions.

Key Issues

Access Issues.

High Press Interest.

response.epa.gov/oakgrove