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EPA Adds Sites to National Priorities List to Reduce Risk to Public Health and Environment

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is adding 10 and proposing to add eight hazardous waste sites to the Superfund program's National Priorities List (NPL). These sites have contamination from a variety of sources, including manufacturing, mining, battery recycling and dry cleaning.

EPA adds sites to the NPL when mismanagement of contamination threatens public health and the environment. EPA typically initiates Superfund involvement at a site because states, tribes or citizens ask for the agency's help. The agency may also find contamination during its own investigations.

Superfund doesn't just address legacy sites; nine of the 18 sites EPA is adding or proposing today were in operation within the last two decades.

These sites can threaten the health of entire communities. Some groups of people, such as children, pregnant women and the elderly, may be at particular risk. During environmental emergencies, health threats — poisoning, injuries from fires and explosions — are often urgent and immediate. At other sites, health effects such as cancer and birth defects may be more long term. Superfund cleans up or isolates contamination, keeping it away from people and the environment.

Ecosystems at Superfund sites can be harmed in two primary ways. First, contaminants can accumulate in plants and animals at abnormally high concentrations, reducing survival and growth rates. This accumulation can alter the composition of species in an area, seriously damage or destroy the ecosystem, and render fish, shellfish, game and plants inedible. Second, activities at some sites have resulted in destruction of vegetation and topsoil. The lack of plants means there is nothing to mitigate stormwater runoff or provide wildlife habitat.

"The sites on the NPL pose the highest risk to the environment and public health," said Mathy Stanislaus, assistant administrator of EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management. "By cleaning up these sites, not only are we benefitting the health of our people and our ecosystems, in many cases, we are benefitting local economies. Many Superfund sites can be safely redeveloped, providing communities with new revenue streams."

For all Superfund sites, EPA tests air, water and soil to determine which hazardous substances are present and whether they pose a threat to human health, the environment or both. Where risks greater than acceptable levels exist to public health or the environment, EPA develops and executes plans to clean up contamination.

The following sites have been added to the NPL:

- Anaconda Aluminum Co. Columbia Falls Reduction Plant in Columbia Falls, Mont.
- Argonaut Mine in Jackson, Calif.
- Bonita Peak Mining District in San Juan County, Colo.
- Dorado Ground Water Contamination in Dorado, P.R.
- Eldorado Chemical Co. Inc. in Live Oak, Texas
- North 25th St. Glass and Zinc in Clarksburg, W.Va.

- SBA Shipyard in Jennings, La.
- Valley Pike VOCs in Riverside, Ohio
- Wappinger Creek in Dutchess County, N.Y.
- West Vermont Drinking Water Contamination in Indianapolis, Ind.

The following sites have been proposed for addition to the NPL:

- Anaconda Copper Mine in Yerington, Nev.
- The Battery Recycling Company in Bo. Cambalache, P.R.
- Former Custom Cleaners in Memphis, Tenn.
- Highway 18 Ground Water in Kermit, Texas
- Microfab Inc (Former) in Amesbury, Mass.
- Old HWY 275 and N 288th Street in Valley, Neb.
- Post and Lumber Preserving Co. Inc. in Quincy, Fla.
- Sant-Gobain Performance Plastics in Village of Hoosick Falls, N.Y.

Superfund cleanups benefit the health of those who live on or near Superfund sites. Academic research has shown these cleanups reduce birth defects close to a site by as much as 25 percent. Additionally, cleanups involving lead-contaminated soil have contributed to documented reductions in children's blood-lead levels. If left unaddressed, elevated blood-lead levels may result in irreversible neurological deficits, such as lowered intelligence and attention-related behavioral problems.

When EPA cleans up a site or a portion of a site, it frequently returns to beneficial uses. More than 850 Superfund sites nationwide have some type of actual or planned reuse underway. For example, the Coalinga Asbestos Mine in Coalinga, California, is home to 33 businesses that employ over 450 people, providing annual employment income of about $16.3 million. Two new residential developments are also located there, providing much-needed housing in a rapidly growing community.

Cleanups increase tax revenue and create jobs during and after cleanup. EPA reviewed 454 Superfund sites supporting use or reuse activities. The agency found at the end of fiscal year 2015 that these sites had approximately 3,900 businesses with 108,000 employees and annual sales of more than $29 billion.

Community partnerships are critical to Superfund site cleanups. EPA's goal is to work with community partners at every site by establishing an effective process to fully explore future uses before the cleanup remedy's selection. This approach gives EPA the best chance of ensuring remedies are consistent with a site's likely future use.

For Federal Register notices and supporting documents for the final and proposed sites:
http://www.epa.gov/superfund/current-npl-updates-new-proposed-npl-sites-and-new-npl-sites

For information about Superfund and the NPL: http://www.epa.gov/superfund

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