ADEQ
ARKANSAS
Department of Environmental Quality

News Release

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ADEQ, CHEMICAL COMPANIES REACH AGREEMENT

The Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and three parties it sued last year involving operation of the former Cedar Chemical Corp. plant at West Helena have signed an agreement for interim measures to address long-standing chemical contamination problems at the facility. As a result, the ADEQ has asked for the voluntary dismissal of the suit.

The original suit was filed in Phillips County Circuit Court last July against Wormald Americas, Inc., successor to Ansul, Inc.; Helena Chemical Co.; and Exxon Mobil Corp., successor to Mobil Chemical Co. All three parties recently signed a consent administrative order (CAO) with the ADEQ, which includes reimbursement to the state agency for its expenses incurred for site maintenance and interim remedial measures while a comprehensive assessment of corrective actions needed at the site is developed.

"Our primary concern in such matters is always the protection of human health and the environment," said ADEQ Director Teresa Marks. "In this case those interests are best served through a negotiated settlement which can immediately focus on how to clean up this site, and which avoids the prospect of lengthy and costly legal proceedings that ultimately delay the corrective action needed."

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For about 30 years, the facility was operated under several owners, manufacturing and processing of a variety of agricultural chemicals. Cedar Chemical Corp. was the last owner of the site, declaring bankruptcy in 2002. Under provisions of an October, 2002, order by a federal bankruptcy court in New York, Cedar was allowed to abandon the site. The ADEQ has provided security and maintenance at the site since that time.

Copies of the ADEQ's petition to dismiss the suit and the CAO are available on the agency's Internet web site at www.adeq.state.ar.us, or by contacting the ADEQ Public Outreach and Assistance Division at 501-682-0923.

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