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Bcc: Maier, Brent[Maier.Brent@epa.gov]
From: Maier, Brent
Sent: Thur 2/26/2015 7:55:24 PM
Subject: U.S. EPA's Winnemucca Mercury Response

Dear Colleagues:

I wanted to pass along a brief summary included below of the recent mercury response that U.S. EPA Region IX's Emergency Response Section conducted in Winnemucca, NV. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information on EPA's emergency response action.

Regards,

Brent Maier

Congressional Liaison

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX

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On February 19, 2015, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) was asked by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection to assist in a response to mercury contamination at Winnemucca Junior High School, in Winnemucca, NV. A USEPA on-scene coordinator (OSC), accompanied by emergency response contractors, immediately deployed to Winnemucca.

Earlier that morning, a student had brought a salt shaker filled with mercury to school and left trails of it through the hallways and on the school bus. After discovering the contamination, the school was evacuated and a Unified Command, consisting of local Fire, Police and EMS was established. Approximately 400 children were decontaminated by removal of their shoes and cleansing of their feet. Approximately 12 children who had direct contact with the mercury were fully decontaminated. Mercury evaporates at room temperature and mercury vapors are a significant health hazard if inhaled.

Remediation of the school was initiated on February 20th and conducted by a cleanup contractor hired by the School District. USEPA provided technical support to the School District with regard to cleanup of the school. At the request of the School District, USEPA also conducted mercury monitoring of a number of other School District properties and buses, and found no significant levels of mercury.

USEPA also conducted mercury monitoring at the residence of the child who brought the mercury to the school. Mercury levels at the residence were found in excess of 50,000 ng/cubic meter. (USEPA uses a screening level of 1000 ng/cubic meter in evaluating residential indoor air quality). Local agencies have relocated the residents and red-tagged the building, and will be removing the tag now that the building has been remediated. Subsequently, USEPA identified a second residence where the same child also spilled mercury. Mercury levels at the second residence exceeded 17,000 ng/cubic meter. EPA also recommended that these residents not occupy their home until remediation had been completed. USEPA mobilized clean up contractors to perform remediation of these two homes. Work was completed and USEPA contractors demobilized Feb 26, 2015.

USEPA expended approximately $50,000 of extramural resources and several hundred hours of staff time on this emergency response and in support of state and local authorities.