

EPA to levy additional fines against Energy Department

Jan. 8 -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is threatening to levy additional fines against the Energy Department unless it immediately resumes cleanup activities at its Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in Livermore, Calif.

The EPA, Energy Department and California officials signed a federal facilities agreement in June 1988 that the Energy Department's responsibilities and milestones for addressing site contamination.

The department has failed to operate numerous groundwater and soil vapor treatment facilities and associated wells -- an integral part of cleanup activities at the site, according to the EPA. While pump-and-treat systems have been shutdown, site contamination has spread laterally and vertically, resulting in a larger volume of contaminated groundwater and increasing timeframes for completing the overall cleanup, according to the EPA.

"The shutdown of the treatment systems puts the community and the environment at risk," said Michael Montgomery, assistant director for the EPA's Superfund Division in the Pacific Southwest region.

The EPA is seeking \$105,000 in penalties for the period from July to September 2008 for Energy Department's failure to resume cleanup.

Additionally, the EPA is continuing to assess penalties of \$10,000 per week from Oct. 1 until Energy officials resume the cleanup.

The one square-mile Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory site is an active research laboratory operated by the University of California for the U.S. Department of Energy. Research carried out at the site generates hazardous and radioactive waste.

Numerous hazardous chemicals, volatile organic compounds and tritium -- a radioactive isotope -- contaminate the site and nearby groundwater, according to the government.

A copy of the letter the EPA sent to Energy officials regarding may be viewed online at www.epa.gov/region09/superfund/index.html.

Information about the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Superfund site is available at www.epa.gov/region09/lawrencelivermoremain.

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