

EPA to remove hazardous wastes at Elizabeth Mining and Development property in Montrose County

Abandoned wastes pose risk to human health, local water resources

(Denver, Colorado -- July 27, 2010) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will conduct an emergency removal of hazardous substances this week at the 35-acre Elizabeth Mining and Development, Inc.(EMDI) site located at 11948 6300 Road, four miles northwest of Montrose, in Montrose County. EPA estimates that the cleanup will be complete by the end of the week.

“EPA will remove a large volume of abandoned hazardous material from the Elizabeth Mining and Development property,” said Christopher Wardell, Community Involvement Coordinator with EPA’s office in Denver. “This cleanup will safely dispose of more than 6,000 gallons of acids, explosive material, and other liquids that pose a risk to nearby waters and residents.”

The EMDI site had been most recently used for reclaiming rare metals from used catalytic converters. The reclamation process employed large equipment to shred converters and an acid bath process to recover metals. Several categories of waste by-products were stored on site including lead, chromium, corrosives (sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, sodium hydroxide), caustics, sodium nitrate, potassium nitrate, and ethyl acetate.

EPA has determined that conditions at the EMDI site represent a substantial threat to public health and the environment. The property sits on the flood plain of the Uncompahgre River and is less than a quarter mile from a housing development. Contaminants present at the site may impact nearby drainages and surface waters. During runoff from rain and snow melt, hazardous substances stored in unsecure containers, drums, and vats may leak into the environment. There is also a significant fire risk associated with large volumes of flammable liquids and oxidizers on the site.

During the removal action, EPA will clean up all material considered hazardous to human health and the environment. EPA will not remove machinery, cars, or other equipment that is not contaminated.

EMDI, owned by Joe and Steven Casebolt, has operated at the site since 1998. The company has been the subject of several previous federal, state, and local actions including a 1998 EPA removal action at the nearby Hi-Tech Metals site, also in Montrose County.