INEEL & Contractors Settle on Asbestos and CFC Violations

October 29, 2001

Contractors for the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL) have paid over $160,000 in penalties for violating federal asbestos and chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) emissions laws.

Lockheed Martin Idaho Technologies Company (LMITCO) was the Management and Operating Contractor at INEEL until October 1, 1999, when the company was replaced by Bechtel BWXT Idaho, LLC (BBWI).

The asbestos violations were discovered in October of 1999 when EPA conducted an unannounced inspection of asbestos abatement and demolition work at the site. The violations include:

- failure to remove all regulated asbestos-containing material before demolition;
- failure to strip all regulated material from large facility components;
- failure to adequately wet and keep wet regulated material;
- failure to prevent visible emissions; and
- other violations involving marking vehicles, disposing of material, and including correct information in their notification.

Inhalation of asbestos fibers can cause lung cancer and other lung diseases. EPA has developed National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants regulations (the asbestos NESHAP) for renovation and demolition projects to prevent release of asbestos fibers into the environment. The asbestos regulations protect the public by minimizing the release of asbestos fibers during activities involving the
processing, handling, and disposal of asbestos-containing material.

The CFC violations were discovered when a Bechtel employee notified EPA of the loss of 300 pounds of refrigerant from a cooling system at the INEEL. The refrigerant leak was first discovered in July 1999 and had not yet been fixed. EPA sent an information request to Bechtel which subsequently provided over 1500 pages of records. In reviewing the records, EPA found numerous violations of the record keeping and leak repair requirements. Specifically, EPA found that at various times from June 15, 1997, to July 1, 2000, no records were kept of what service was performed and how much refrigerant was added to comfort cooling systems at the Idaho Nuclear Technical and Engineering Center (INTEC) at INEEL. In addition, EPA found that comfort cooling systems with annualized leak rates greater than 15% were not repaired within 30 days.

Scientists worldwide have concluded that CFCs damage the stratospheric ozone layer, which already is significantly depleted over Antarctica, and, to a lesser extent, over North America, Europe and other populated areas.

When allowed to escape into the air, the CFC molecule breaks apart releasing chlorine, which then attacks the earth=s protective ozone layer, located in the upper atmosphere 30 miles above the earth=s surface. A single chlorine atom can destroy more than 100,000 ozone molecules. This layer of gas screens individuals from the sun=s powerful and harmful ultraviolet radiation, which can lead to sunburn, cataracts and skin cancer. Increased radiation also can damage important food crops and marine ecosystems.

The final penalty in the combined asbestos/CFC case is $160,559, of which LMITCO will pay $130,175.50 and BBWI will pay $30,383.50.

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