General Electric to Pay $234,000 For Environmental Violations

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Enforcement Case Settled on Waterford Silicones Plant

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) John P. Cahill announced today that the General Electric Company (GE) will pay a $234,000 penalty to the State to settle a DEC enforcement action concerning the company's silicones products plant in Waterford, Saratoga County.

A consent order signed today by Commissioner Cahill and previously by General Electric resolves allegations that GE violated its permits and environmental laws regulating air emissions, water discharges and storage of hazardous waste at the plant. The alleged violations occurred in 1996 and 1997.

"These violations did not cause significant harm to the Hudson River or New York's natural resources," Commissioner Cahill said. "Nevertheless, this enforcement action and penalty send a clear signal to General Electric that these violations are unacceptable and that it must improve the environmental performance of its Waterford facility."

DEC alleged that GE committed the following violations of its State Pollution Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit, which regulates how much waste can be discharged into the Hudson River from the Waterford facility:

- Ethylene glycol was discharged into the Hudson River on three occasions in January, February and April 1996.
- Thirty-three and 42.2 pounds of zinc were discharged into the Hudson River on March 5-6, 1996, and March 11, 1997, respectively. GE's permit allows a maximum daily discharge
of 18.8 pounds of zinc.

- Small quantities of untreated sewage were discharged into the Hudson River twice in April 1996.
- Silicone oil or oil was discharged into the Hudson River, causing a sheen on the river's surface, on seven occasions during August, September and October 1996 and February, April and September 1997.
- A small quantity of propylene glycol was discharged into the Hudson River on Oct. 1, 1996.
- 200 gallons of hydrochloric acid were discharged into the Mudderkill, a tributary of the Hudson River, on Oct. 22, 1996.
- Process wastewater was discharged into the Hudson River on 30 occasions in 1996 and 1997.
- Oil was discharged to a drainage ditch on March 6, 1997.
- An unknown quantity of sanitary sewage was discharged into the Hudson River on May 4, 1997.
- A small quantity of chlorine, oil and grease was discharged to the Hudson River on Sept. 9, 1997.
- Without approval, GE added neutralization to lagoon waters to normalize the water's PH prior to its entry to the Hudson River.

DEC also alleged GE violated its hazardous waste storage permit and State regulations regarding storage of hazardous waste by: inadequately securing drums of hazardous waste; improperly storing waste; inadequately maintaining secondary containment systems on seven storage tanks; and failing to perform more than 100 daily and weekly inspections of hazardous waste tank systems and storage areas.

DEC also alleged several violations of GE's air permit, including the failure to provide the required flow of water to the facility's air scrubbers and/or to record the rate of water flow.

In signing the consent order, GE does not admit that the violations occurred.

The Waterford facility is located on 880 acres two miles north of the village of Waterford on Routes 4 & 32. The facility produces a variety of silicone products including paint resins, silicone fluid, construction sealants, and silicone rubber.

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