Fluor-Hanford and Twin City Metals agree to pay EPA nearly $85,000 to resolve federal PCB violations

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(Seattle, Wash. – Nov. 1, 2007) Fluor-Hanford (Fluor), the primary clean-up contractor at the Department of Energy's Hanford Reservation, and Twin City Metals (TCM), a Richland, Washington, metal recycler, have agreed to pay the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency a combined total of $84,800 in penalties for mis-handling PCB-contaminated transformers.

According to Mike Bussell, Director of EPA's Compliance and Enforcement Office in Seattle, this is a classic case of toxic "ripple effect" that was completely unnecessary.

"Risks to human health and the environment could've been greatly reduced, at a fraction of the cost, if this was handled correctly in the first place," said EPA's Bussell. "By carefully handling all transformers, and diligently cleaning-up any spills that occur as quickly as possible, damage can be prevented and costly cleanups avoided."

In May, 2006, 60 transformers were transported by trucks from Hanford to TCM. Fluor arranged the transfer on behalf of DOE. One of the transformers contained approximately 50 gallons of fluid contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls ("PCBs") at a concentration of 250 parts per million ("ppm").

The next day, as TCM was handling the transformers for the purpose of brokering the transformer metal for re-sale, fluid was spilled from the PCB-contaminated transformer. According to documents associated with the investigation, TCM notified Fluor about this spill later that day, but Fluor took no immediate action to either limit or abate the spill. A significant portion of the fluid was spilled onto soil at TCM, but contaminated fluid was also spilled onto equipment and other surfaces.

Several TCM employees may have been exposed to PCBs by either handling the contaminated transformer, or walking though contaminated soil where fluid had spilled from the transformer.

The next day, June 2, the PCB-contaminated transformer was transported by truck to Joseph Simon and Sons, Inc. ("JS&S"), a metal recycling business located in Tacoma, Washington. The PCB-contaminated transformer was offloaded at JS&S and employees of JS&S may have been exposed to PCBs by handling the contaminated transformer.

Approximately a week later, Fluor obtained a sampling results which confirmed that the transformer had spilled PCB contaminated (250 ppm) fluid. Fluor then initiated cleanup actions at the homes of workers who were potentially exposed to the PCBs as well as at both the TCM and JS&S facilities.

According to the Consent Agreement, the settlement terms included Fluor paying a penalty of $54,800 and Twin City Metals paying a penalty of $30,000. Both companies have 30 days from the filing of the Final Order to submit payment to the U.S. EPA penalties & finance center.

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To learn more about PCBs and EPA's Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA):
http://www.epa.gov/oppgtr/index.html
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