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EPA inks pair of settlements with Department of Energy and contractors over Hanford asbestos handling violations

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(Seattle, WA – April 2, 2014) The U.S. EPA has signed a pair of consent agreements with the U.S. Department of Energy and two contractors to resolve alleged violations of federal asbestos handling regulations at the Hanford Site near Richland, Washington.

Today's settlements stem from what EPA determined was improper demolition work performed at the DOE Hanford Site. In August 2012, in response to complaints from Hanford workers, EPA inspected several demolition sites dating back to 2007. Samples collected by EPA showed remaining debris from the demolitions contained regulated asbestos waste.

Work performed at Hanford on behalf of the DOE by contractors Washington Closure Hanford LLC and CH2M HILL Plateau Remediation Company resulted in penalties of \$44,000 and \$131,594, respectively. Both contractors agreed to pay all penalties.

According to Ed Kowalski, Director of EPA's Enforcement Office in Seattle, the results of EPA's inspection were clear.

"Asbestos was poorly managed here from start to finish," said Kowalski. "EPA requires all building owners and contractors to remove asbestos before starting any regulated demolition activity which can crush or pulverize asbestos and release dust. At a facility like Hanford, this is especially important to prevent asbestos exposure to anyone working or spending time in the area."

Among EPA's inspection findings:

- DOE and the contractors failed to remove more than 100,000 square feet of asbestos prior to demolishing buildings and structures as required by federal law.
- DOE and the contractors provided incomplete or inaccurate notifications to EPA or the local air agency, Benton Clean Air Authority, as the demolition projects were underway.
- Inspection of a waste storage trailer showed some wastes were not properly contained in leak-tight containers.

Asbestos is a hazardous air pollutant which EPA has regulated since the 1970's to protect public health. If inhaled, asbestos fibers can lodge in a person's lungs and lead to significant respiratory health conditions including lung cancer and mesothelioma, a rare form of cancer that is found in the thin lining of the lung, chest and abdomen. Asbestos exposure can also cause asbestosis, a serious progressive, long-term, non-cancer fibrotic disease of the lungs.

For more about how EPA protects people from asbestos risks: <http://www2.epa.gov/asbestos>

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