

EPA ORDERS FMC TO TREAT PHOSPHINE GAS AT ADDITIONAL CLOSED PONDS



Closed FMC Facilities, Eastern Michaud Flats Superfund Site, Power County, ID

United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 10

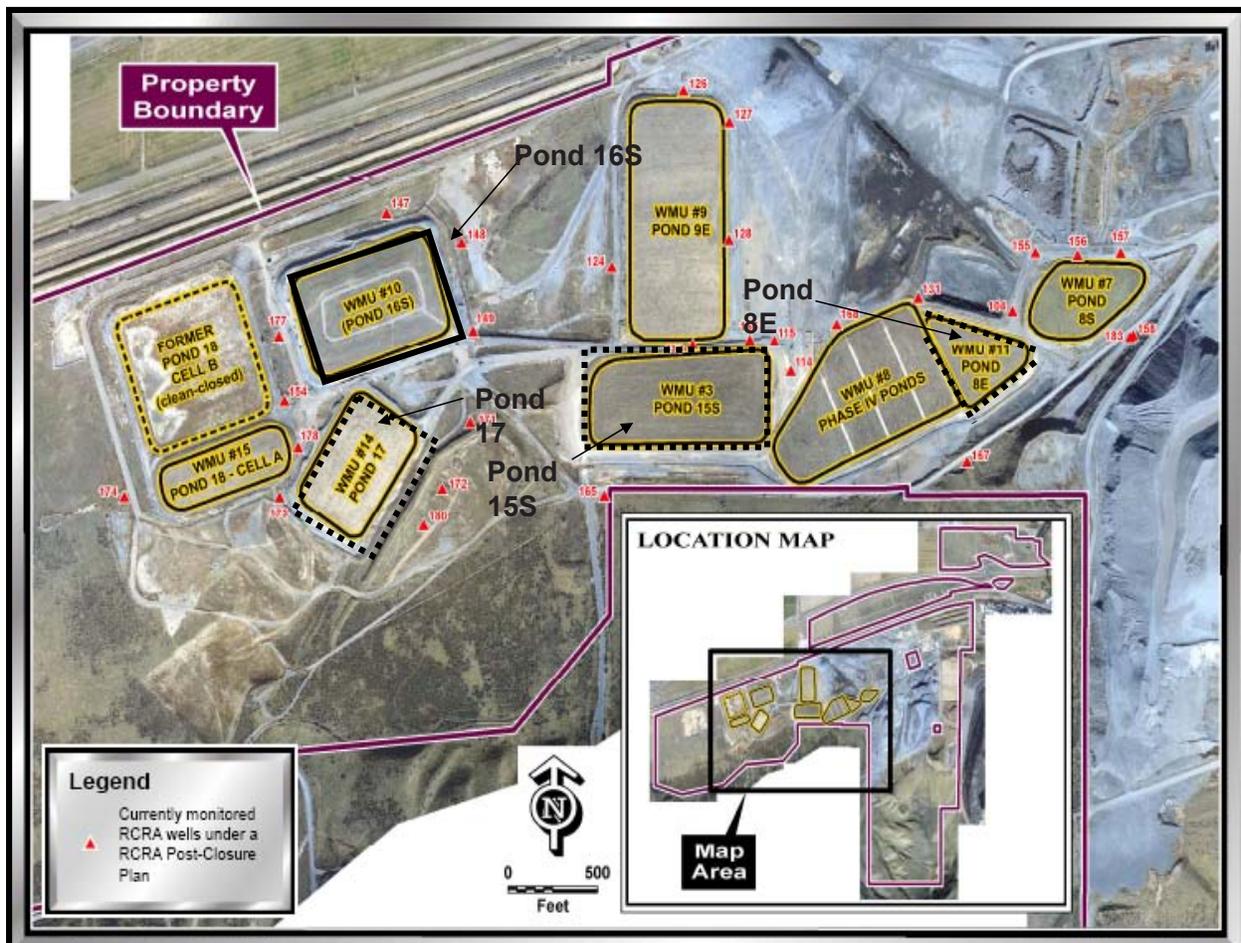
June 2010

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has ordered FMC to extract and treat hazardous gas from additional capped ponds at their facility near Pocatello. The Unilateral Administrative Order (Order) for a Time Critical Removal Action requires FMC to address phosphine gas releases at Ponds 8E, 15S, and 17, as well as from any other closed ponds regulated under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), where EPA determines that it is necessary to protect human health and the environment. Under the Order, FMC must also conduct additional monitoring at the RCRA ponds and at the facility boundary.

The RCRA ponds are closed and capped hazardous waste ponds 8E, 8S, 9E, 11S, 12S, 13S, 14S, 15S, 16S, 17 and 18. (See location map) These ponds were subject to a legal agreement or Consent Decree entered in court in 1999.

In 2006, visible emissions at Pond 16S led EPA to order FMC to design and construct a gas extraction and treatment system. As a result, Pond 16S gas concentrations were successfully lowered to a safe level. FMC is required to demonstrate that the safe level can be maintained for one year. The one year demonstration period started in November 2009.

Ponds Presently Requiring Gas Treatment



What is Phosphine Gas?

Phosphine (PH₃) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas. Phosphine gas can spontaneously ignite and produces a dense white smoke. Phosphine and its combustion products (phosphorus pentoxide and phosphoric acid aerosols) are severely toxic and irritating.

The hazardous waste ponds at FMC contain waste byproducts from manufacturing elemental phosphorus. Those waste byproducts that contain phosphorus can produce phosphine gas. ATSDR phosphine health and safety information is available at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfactsx7.html

The Order issued on June 14, 2010, requires FMC to extract and treat gas at the other RCRA capped ponds that are currently showing phosphine emissions in ambient air at concentrations that are dangerous to human health. Phosphine gas has not been detected at the facility boundary.

EPA, in coordination with the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, will review all design documents, work plans, construction activities, and all operations required by the Order. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality will continue to provide technical support to EPA.

FMC has installed a temporary gas extraction and treatment system at Pond 15S and phosphine levels have already decreased significantly. EPA has issued the Order to ensure sustained protection of human health and the environment at all the closed RCRA ponds and at the facility boundary. EPA plans to revise the post closure plans for the RCRA ponds to address any additional actions that may be necessary.

The Unilateral Administrative Order is available at www.epaos.org/FMCPonds. Levels of phosphine gas detected at Pond 15S are hazardous to unprotected workers onsite, according to the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare (IDHW) and the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR). IDHW and ATSDR also found potential for releases from other RCRA ponds in the future. The Letter Health Consultation from IDHW/ATSDR for Phosphine Gas at Pond 15S, is available at <http://go.usa.gov/3or>

Site Background

The FMC site is located in southeastern Idaho off of old highway 30 in Power County, about 2.5 miles northwest of Pocatello, Idaho (See location map). FMC manufactured elemental phosphorus from the 1940's until they closed in 2001. This site is part of the Eastern Michaud Flats (EMF) Superfund site which also includes the adjacent Simplot Don Fertilizer Plant and the surrounding Off-Plant area.



Example of a temporary phosphine gas treatment system at Pond 16S prior to the installation of the designed Gas Extraction and Treatment System. A similar temporary system is operating at Pond 15S.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Information repositories for the EMF Superfund Site have been established at three local locations noted below. Key documents are available at the local repositories, and an Administrative Record for the Order is being prepared and will be made available at EPA's offices in Seattle in the next few weeks.

Additional information about all cleanup activities at the EMF site can be found at <http://go.usa.gov/iTC>

Contacts

For more information or to be added to our *Southeast Idaho Update* mailing list, please contact: Sue Skinner, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, (208) 282-4326 or skinner.susan@epa.gov

For technical information regarding the Order, please contact: Greg Weigel, On-Scene-Coordinator (208) 378-5773 or weigel.greg@epa.gov

Local Repositories

Idaho State University Library
Government Documents
850 South 9th Avenue
Pocatello, Idaho 83209
(208) 282-3152

Shoshone-Bannock Library
Tribal Business Center
Pima Drive and Bannock Avenue
Fort Hall, Idaho 83203
(208) 478-3882

(New) American Falls Library
308 Roosevelt Street
American Falls, Idaho 83211
(This repository only has records starting from Feb. 2009)

EPA Region 10 Superfund Records Center
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, ECL-076
(7th Floor)
Seattle, WA 98101
(206) 553-4494



If you need materials in an alternative format, please contact Susan Skinner at (208) 282-4326 (TTY users please call the Federal Relay Service: (800) 877-8339)



U. S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, ETPA-081
Seattle, Washington 98101-3140



Power County, ID

June 2010

MORE TREATMENT ORDERED

The EPA has ordered FMC to extract and treat hazardous gas from additional capped ponds

READ INSIDE FOR DETAILS



Printed on 100% recycled paper