



EPA/DTSC team up to clean up toxic hazard

DTSC's Emergency Response Unit supervised the removal of about 5,000 gallons of acids and other caustic and toxic liquids from a shuttered chrome plating shop in San Bernardino County.

[California Department of Toxic Substances Control](#) became involved at the request of the [San Bernardino County Fire Department](#), which, as the lead agency, also called the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

As DTSC can move quicker than US EPA, it was agreed that the state's Emergency Response Unit would fix the roof and remove hazardous liquids, preventing a potential catastrophic release of hazardous waste. The roof repairs prevented rainfall from overflowing a secondary containment basin around the processing tanks of the former Fontana Plating & Polishing in Bloomington, said George Baker, Emergency Response Coordinator in DTSC's Cypress office.

Then, DTSC contracted cleanup crews wearing protective gear, sometimes including Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus, spent dozens of hours over the last several weeks removing acids, oxidizers, corrosives and other potential toxic chemicals used in the metal plating process.

The property has been secured with fences and padlocks, but removing the chemicals swiftly was crucial. "You cannot allow uncontrolled hazardous waste to go on," Baker said. "It is a public health issue. There is always the threat of off-site migration of waste, additional contamination or a break-in. It has to be taken care of."

The crews tested ingredients in hundreds of small containers, and then consolidated compatible chemicals into larger drums for transport to a hazardous waste facility.



DTSC supervised the removal of toxic chemicals from a closed Fontana plating business.



Team up continued

Baker estimated the cost to DTSC was about \$60,000, which the department will attempt to recover from the business owner.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has an agreement with the landowner to continue in their portion of the abatement, which includes removing sludge material, solid hazardous waste, contaminated equipment, concrete and conducting environmental testing. The USEPA will step in and take final control of the property if the landowner cannot comply, Baker said. Their portion could cost more than \$250,000. The fate of the building is unknown.

When operating, the business stripped metal from vehicles and dipped auto parts into tanks of acid. It is the second shuttered plating shop that DTSC's emergency response staff has been summoned to in recent months. [One in Yuba City](#) contained more than 11,000 gallons of potentially hazardous chemicals.

"This is a dirty wet business that uses many hazardous chemicals and dangerous processes (including high-voltage electricity)," Baker said. "Electroplating generates large quantities of hazardous waste, and uncontrolled has the potential to create environmental havoc. Plating wastes hit every US Department of Transportation hazard category," Baker said.