

DTSC Issues Quemetco an Addendum to Summary of Violations

July 13, 2016

Summary of DTSC Actions

On July 12, 2016, the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) issued an Addendum to a Summary of Violations to the Quemetco, Inc., battery recycling facility in the City of Industry in Los Angeles County over its failure to maintain a functioning leak-detection system in its “containment building” that contains hazardous waste related to the facility’s handling of lead. Quemetco must submit a plan to DTSC to correct the violation, as well as a schedule for completing that work. The affected portion of the containment building must be taken out of service and may not be used until Quemetco demonstrates it is back in compliance.

Site Background

The facility, operated by Quemetco, Inc., recycles lead-acid batteries, which involves separating lead from other components, smelting the lead and refining it to meet customer specifications. The facility has been in operation since 1959. The facility operates under several different permits and regulations including:

- Air Quality - overseen by the South Coast Air Quality Management District
- Water Quality - overseen by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board and the Los Angeles County Sanitation District
- Hazardous Waste - overseen by the Department of Toxic Substances Control

Requirement for a Leak Detection System

Under California’s hazardous waste management regulations, Quemetco’s containment building is required to have a properly functioning leak-detection system because it manages liquid hazardous waste. The leak detection system allows Quemetco and DTSC to confirm that the building’s thick concrete floor is successfully preventing leaks from reaching the building’s foundation, which acts as another barrier that prevents a release to the environment.

The leak detection system is a layer of sand on a thick plastic material located between the concrete floor and concrete foundation. Quemetco’s violation stems from the lack of a way to monitor whether leaks are occurring through the floor and into the layer of sand. Tests performed last week during a scheduled inspection determined the system did not comply with regulatory requirements.

DTSC has notified Quemetco that the affected portion of its containment building must be taken out of service and may not be used until Quemetco demonstrates it is back in compliance with the applicable regulations. DTSC is also requiring Quemetco, as part of its plan to correct the violation, to take borings to determine if there has been any leakage.

DTSC's Recent Violations Issued Against Quemetco

This latest Summary of Violation is in addition to other recent Summary of Violations DTSC issued to Quemetco.

On August 5, 2015, DTSC issued Quemetco a Summary of Violations that notified the facility it failed to maintain an adequate groundwater and surface water monitoring system that complies with regulatory requirements.

On June 1, 2016, DTSC issued an Addendum to the Summary of Violations related to inadequate water monitoring. Quemetco must develop compliant water monitoring plans that will effectively measure if operations at the facility result in contamination. The June 1st Addendum sets out a compliance schedule for Quemetco to respond.

On June 20, 2016, DTSC issued Quemetco a Summary of Violation because DTSC inspectors observed problems with the leak detection system. DTSC's Addendum issued on July 12, follows up on the June 20th Summary of Violations.
