



## News Release

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### **DTSC Orders Quemetco to Fix Hazardous Waste Leak-Detection System**

Battery Recycler Must Correct Violations

**SACRAMENTO** – The California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) today ordered the Quemetco battery recycling facility in the City of Industry to correct violations related to its failure to have a functioning leak-detection system and maintain its containment building, which holds hazardous lead waste, to minimize the possibility of any release.

"We expect Quemetco to quickly fix these serious violations, and we will continue to monitor its operation closely," said Keith Kihara, Chief of DTSC's Enforcement Division.

Quemetco's containment building is required to have a properly functioning leak-detection system because it manages liquid hazardous waste left over from the recycling process. The leak-detection system allows Quemetco and DTSC to confirm 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.

Under California law, this order goes into effect 15 days after the order is delivered to Quemetco. Pursuant to the Enforcement Order, Quemetco must meet the following deadlines:

- Immediately upon the effective date, stop putting hazardous waste or other lead-bearing material in the containment building
- Within three days of the effective date, repair a hole in the containment building wall and eliminate and/or seal any gaps under the doors to prevent any release of hazardous waste
- Within seven days of the effective date, submit to DTSC a plan to remove all hazardous waste stored in the containment building and remove all hazardous waste stored in the containment building within seven days of DTSC approval of the plan.
- Quemetco must also inspect the primary barrier of the containment building to ensure the primary barrier is free of cracks that could lead to any release of hazardous waste
- Within 30 days of the effective date, submit a work plan to establish and maintain a functioning leak-detection and liquid-collection system
- Within 30 days of the effective date, submit a work plan to determine whether there have been releases of hazardous waste from the containment building's primary barrier and secondary containment systems

In issuing this order, the Department is elevating its enforcement actions against Quemetco after issuing a series of violations over the last year, including seven non-minor violations this month.

## Summary of Recent Violations

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. On June 1, 2016, DTSC issued an Addendum to that Summary of Violations requiring Quemetco to develop compliant water monitoring plans that will effectively measure if operations at the facility result in contamination.

On June 20, 2016, DTSC issued Quemetco another Summary of Violations after DTSC inspectors observed problems with the leak-detection system in Quemetco's containment building. Quemetco was required to take the affected portion of the containment building out of service until it could demonstrate to the Department that the facility is in compliance with required safeguards.

On July 12, DTSC issued an Addendum to Quemetco citing it for its failure to have a functioning leak detection and liquid collection system for its containment building.

On July 15, DTSC issued a Second Addendum to Quemetco for violations stemming from a multi-day inspection. Among other corrective actions, the facility was instructed to reduce the amount of ground-up lead waste from batteries being stored in its containment building, and maintain the building to prevent any release of hazardous waste.

## Site Background

DTSC is currently overseeing an investigation to determine if past emissions of airborne lead impacted the area surrounding the facility, including sampling soil in residential and industrial neighborhoods, as well as public streets and waterways.

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

The Enforcement Order and Summaries of Violations are on the DTSC website:

<http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/Projects/Quemetco.cfm>



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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit [www.dtsc.ca.gov](http://www.dtsc.ca.gov). To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

***The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products.***