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Environmental Protection
Agency

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Environmental NEWS RELEASE



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EPA: DOW TO CLEAN UP DIOXIN HOT SPOT IN THE SAGINAW RIVER

CHICAGO (Nov. 15, 2007) — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 and Dow Chemical Co. of Midland, Mich., today signed a consent order to begin an emergency cleanup of a previously unknown dioxin hot spot on the Saginaw River.

Under the order, Dow must dredge dioxin-contaminated sediments in the Saginaw. Field work must begin immediately with the dredging to be completed by Dec. 15.

“The extremely high level of dioxin found in the Saginaw River and its possible consequences warrant immediate action,” said Regional Administrator Mary A. Gade. “Today’s Superfund emergency order requires action now to eliminate an imminent and substantial threat to human health and the environment. “

Friday evening, Nov. 9, Dow notified EPA and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality of preliminary results of over 1.6 million parts per trillion (ppt) of dioxin in one sample of sediment taken from the Saginaw River. This dioxin concentration is probably the highest ever found in the Great Lakes. The sample came from a location a half-mile below the confluence of the Tittabawassee and Shiawassee Rivers, roughly adjacent to Wickes Park in Saginaw.

On Sunday, EPA provided Dow legal notice of its potential liability and the Agency’s intent to immediately begin cleanup. Under the Superfund law, EPA gave Dow the option to perform the cleanup under EPA oversight. On Monday, EPA and MDEQ technical experts surveyed the site and met with Dow to discuss

cleanup alternatives. On Tuesday, Dow notified EPA that it would agree to perform the work under an EPA order.

Previously, the highest dioxin level found in the Saginaw was 32,000 ppt. Under June 2007 EPA orders, Dow has been removing three dioxin hotspots from the Tittabawassee River which had concentrations of up to 87,000 ppt. That work is expected to be completed in December.

Dow discovered the latest hot spot during sampling done according to its own September 2007 work plan which has not been approved by either EPA or MDEQ.

Dioxins are highly toxic compounds that pose serious risks to human health and the environment. EPA's reassessment of the most recent scientific findings on dioxin indicates that it is a more potent chemical than previously understood.

For more information about eating fish from the Saginaw River system, contact the Michigan Dept. of Community Health, 800-648-6942. For information about the health effects of dioxin and pathways of human exposure, see the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's website at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts104.html or call 312-886-0840.

Dow's Midland facility is a 1,900-acre chemical manufacturing plant. Dioxins and furans come from the production of chlorine-based products. Past waste disposal practices, fugitive emissions and incineration at Dow resulted in dioxin and furan contamination both on- and off-site.

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