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EPA to begin time-critical removal work at Kaiser site in Mead

Asbestos, PCBs at former aluminum smelter pose risks to people

(July 23, 2020) -- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today that on Monday July 27, it will begin 'time-critical' cleanup actions at the Former Kaiser Smelter Site, in Mead, just north of downtown Spokane.

The work will reduce or eliminate risks to people, nearby homes and businesses, and the environment posed by asbestos, PCBs, and other chemicals.

During the first phase of this work crews managed by EPA's Emergency Management Branch will remove PCBs and asbestos-contaminated materials from the 170-acre, developed portion of the site. This part of the site has many large, deteriorating structures and waste piles.

The second phase will remove contaminated water and sediment from settling ponds on a 400-acre, undeveloped part of the site, north of the former plant. These ponds are full and actively releasing PCBs to Deadman Creek -- a tributary of the Little Spokane River -- at levels hundreds of times higher than state water quality standards. Thus, the ponds pose a threat of a larger release of toxic PCBs to the watershed. This work will help protect fish, people who eat fish, and other important elements of the watershed ecosystem.

EPA expects work will wrap up by late December.

In 2019, at the request of the Washington Department of Ecology, EPA conducted field sampling at the site and found very high levels of a number of hazardous chemicals, including cancer-causing PCBs, PAHs, and asbestos-containing materials. These substances pose health risks to people who visit the site and are unaware of the danger.

Work will begin on or around July 27 and is expected to be completed by late December. The current cleanup plans include removing:

- Highly contaminated building siding;

- Siding material that has sloughed off onto the ground;
- Friable asbestos-containing pipe insulation;
- Piles of leftover toxic material; and
- Contaminated water and sediment from the settling ponds and stormwater conveyance system.

For more about the work at the Former Kaiser Smelter Site in Mead go to:

https://response.epa.gov/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=14546

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