



**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 8**

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Ref: 8SEM-EMR

**ACTION MEMORANDUM**

**SUBJECT:** Approval and Funding for a Removal Action at the Glacier Hotel Asbestos Site, Cut Bank, Glacier County, Montana

**FROM:** Joyce Ackerman  
Federal On-Scene Coordinator

**THRU:** Kerry Guy, Supervisor  
Emergency Response Section  
  
Deirdre Rothery, Manager  
Emergency Management Branch

**TO:** Ben Bielenberg, Acting Director  
Superfund and Emergency Management Division

Site ID#: B8C7

**I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Action Memorandum is to request and document approval of the removal action described herein for the Glacier Hotel Asbestos Site (Site) located in the city of Cut Bank, Glacier County, Montana. This time-critical removal action involves the demolition, cleanup and proper disposal of debris from collapsed and partially-collapsed buildings known to contain friable asbestos. The buildings were damaged by a major fire and weathering and have been vandalized.

The buildings include a hotel, hotel addition, and lounge. The Site was identified by the city of Cut Bank (City) as a safety concern, posing a potential asbestos exposure threat to nearby residents, children, and community members. Conditions at the Site present a threat to public health and the environment and meet the criteria for initiating a removal action under 40 CFR § 300.415(b)(2) of the National Contingency Plan (NCP).

This removal action involves no nationally-significant or precedent-setting issues. This time-critical removal action (TCRA) will not establish any precedent for how future response actions

will be taken and will not commit the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to a course of action that could have a significant impact on future responses or resources.

## II. SITE CONDITIONS AND BACKGROUND

|                                      |                                 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Site Name:                           | Glacier Hotel Asbestos Site     |
| Removal Category:                    | Time Critical                   |
| Site Spill ID (SSID):                | B8C7                            |
| NRC Case Number:                     | N/A                             |
| SEMS EPA I.D. Number:                | MTN000821143                    |
| Site Location:                       | Cut Bank/Glacier County/Montana |
| Lat/Long:                            | 48.636429/ -112.333647          |
| Potentially Responsible Party:       | See Enforcement Addendum        |
| National Priority List (NPL) Status: | Non-NPL                         |
| Removal Start Date:                  | Spring 2023                     |

### A. Site Description

#### 1. Removal Site Evaluation

The Glacier Hotel Asbestos Site includes three buildings which are immediately adjacent to one another, all known to contain friable asbestos, that were severely damaged by fire, vandalism and weathering. The buildings include a hotel, hotel addition, and lounge. The hotel and lounge were structurally unsound following the fire so local officials collapsed the walls so they wouldn't fall and cause damage or injury. The hotel addition is missing windows and walls and has a collapsed roof. Trespassers access the buildings.

A Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed in June 2016 for the non-profit Sweetgrass Development Corporation, prior to the 2021 fire, and the ESA included an asbestos inspection. The 2016 inspection identified chrysotile asbestos in numerous building materials in the three buildings including but not limited to insulation, flooring, ceiling texture, roof flashing, and spray-on texture. Concentrations of chrysotile asbestos ranged from 2 percent to 65 percent. An EPA On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) conducted a removal site inspection (RSI) in April 2022. The asbestos-containing materials (ACM) are damaged, causing them to be friable. The ESA containing the inspection report is provided in the administrative record for this Site. Photographs of the buildings are provided in Attachment 2.

There is a release of friable asbestos to the environment due to the exposed pile of ACM debris from the collapsed hotel and lounge and from the hotel addition with collapsed roof and which is missing windows and walls. There is continued access by trespassers. There are no adequate restrictions to prevent persons from accessing the Site. The buildings are in downtown Cut Bank, ½ block from Main Street, immediately adjacent to businesses. Homes are within a block of the Site and a school is three blocks from the Site.

The City requested assistance from the EPA Response Unit to complete demolition and cleanup of the buildings and proper disposal of the asbestos. The ongoing weathering to the buildings will continue to cause releases of asbestos to the environment which will be an inhalation threat to nearby residents and community members.

## **2. Physical Location**

The Site is located in the City of Cut Bank, Glacier County, Montana. According to the 2020 census, the population of Cut Bank was 3,056.

Residential neighborhoods are located within one block of the buildings and commercial businesses are immediately adjacent to the Site. A school is three blocks from the Site. The City is 30 miles south of the Canada-United States border and winters in the area are reported to be long, cold, and dry, averaging 26 inches of snowfall per year. Annual average rainfall is 11 inches per year. According to EPA's Environmental Justice (EJ) Screening and Mapping Tool, the Town has a higher percentage of low-income persons and people of color than state or EPA Region 8 averages.

## **3. Site Characteristics**

The three buildings on the Site were previously used as a hotel, hotel addition, and lounge. ACMs were identified in an inspection in 2016. A fire occurred in 2021, causing major damage. Local officials collapsed the walls of the hotel and lounge after the fire so they wouldn't fall down and cause injury. Trespassers access the Site.

## **4. Release or Threatened Release into the Environment of a Hazardous Substance, Pollutant or Contaminant**

The principal contaminant of concern at the Site is asbestos, which is a hazardous substance as defined by Section 101 (14) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). As the remains of the buildings continue to deteriorate from weather events, vandalism, or scavenging for bricks or metal, there will be ongoing releases of asbestos fibers to the environment from ACM.

Asbestos is a solid material with a variety of forms, including chrysotile which was found at the Site in several building materials. Asbestos is highly resistant to heat and has exceptional tensile strength, both of which are characteristics that lend themselves to use in ordinary building materials. Asbestos tends to become brittle over time, shattering into fiber bundles due to age and weathering, and is then referred to as being friable. Subsequently, the friable fiber bundles can further degrade into microscopic fibers that can be distributed into the air.

An EPA On-Scene Coordinator determined that the Site poses a direct threat to public health and welfare because friable ACMs are present in the heavily

damaged collapsed buildings and are being released into the environment from the debris piles and from the building with the collapsed roof and missing walls and windows. Asbestos fibers will continue to be released into the environment as the ACMs weather and become friable due to ongoing exposure to wind, rain, and snow as well as damage caused by scavengers or vandalism. Asbestos fibers pose an inhalation threat to persons accessing the Site as well as nearby residents, community members, and children. Human exposure to airborne asbestos fibers via inhalation has been proven to cause asbestosis, cancer, mesothelioma, and other respiratory diseases.

**5. NPL Status**

This Site is not on the NPL, nor is it currently proposed for inclusion on the NPL.

**6. Maps, Pictures and Other Graphic Representations**

A Site map is provided in Attachment 1 and photos are provided in Attachment 2.

**B. Other Actions to Date**

**1. Previous Actions**

An ESA was conducted in 2016 including an asbestos inspection. The 2021 fire caused severe damage to the buildings, making it possible for a release of asbestos fibers to the environment.

**2. Current Actions**

There are no current activities at the Site.

**C. State and Local Authorities' Roles**

**1. State and Local Actions to Date**

An EPA OSC met with City officials during the RSI in April 2022. The Town's limited resources are not sufficient to address the environmental exposures posed by the Site.

**2. Potential for Continued State/Local Response**

Neither the City nor the state will have the resources to conduct the proposed removal action at the Site.

**III. THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH OR WELFARE OR THE ENVIRONMENT, AND STATUTORY AND REGULATORY AUTHORITIES**

Conditions at the Site present a threat to public health and the environment and meet the criteria for initiating a removal action under 40 CFR 300.415(b)(2) of the NCP.

EPA has considered all the factors described in 40 CFR 300.415(b)(2) of the NCP and determined that the following factors apply at the Site:

“(i) Actual or potential exposure to nearby human populations, animals, or the food chain from hazardous substances, or pollutants or contaminants:”

The Site poses a direct threat to public health and welfare because friable ACMs are present in the heavily damaged, collapsed buildings and are being released into the environment due to the uncontained debris piles, collapsed roofs, and missing walls and windows. This may result in exposure to nearby residents, children, and trespassers. There are no access restrictions to prevent persons from entering the Site.

“(v) Weather conditions that may cause hazardous substances or pollutants or contaminants to migrate or be released:”

The Site includes uncontained debris piles and a heavily damaged building that are in poor condition and completely open to the environment. Weather events including wind, rain and snow will cause continued degradation of the debris piles and remaining portions of the structures. Asbestos fibers will continue to be released from the ACM as additional material continues to weather and becomes friable due to ongoing exposure to the elements.

“(vii) The availability of other appropriate federal or state mechanisms to respond to the release:”

No other local, state, or federal agency is in the position or has the resources to independently implement a timely, effective response action to address the ongoing threat presented by the Site.

#### **IV. PROPOSED ACTIONS AND ESTIMATED COSTS**

##### **A. Proposed Actions**

###### **1. Proposed Action Description**

Due to the partial collapse and heavy damage of the hotel addition from fire, vandalism, and weathering and its lack of structural integrity, the EPA will complete demolition of the building and dispose of that debris as well as the debris piles from the hotel and lounge as ACM. All cleanup activities that will disturb ACM will be conducted using adequately wet methods to prevent the migration of asbestos fibers. No post-removal Site controls are anticipated to be necessary following the removal action. The EPA will identify the closest landfills allowed to accept ACM and which are in compliance with the CERCLA Off-Site Rule (40 CFR 300.440).

###### **2. Contribution to Remedial Performance**

This effort will, to the extent practical, contribute to any future remedial effort at the Site. However, no further federal action is anticipated at this time.

**3. Engineering Evaluation/Cost Analysis (EE/CA)**

An EE/CA is not required for a time-critical removal action.

**4. Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate Requirements (ARARs)**

Removal actions conducted under CERCLA are required to attain ARARs to the extent practicable considering the exigencies of the situation. In determining whether compliance with ARARs is practicable, the lead agency may consider appropriate factors including the urgency of the situation and the scope of the removal action to be conducted. The ARARs are identified in Attachment 3.

**5. Project Schedule**

The removal action is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2023. All removal activities should be completed within eight weeks of the beginning of on-Site activities.

**B. Estimated Costs\***

| <b>Contractor Costs</b>              | <b>Estimated Costs</b> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| ERRS contractor                      | \$999,000              |
| START contractor                     | \$100,000              |
| SUBTOTAL                             | \$1,099,000            |
| Contingency Costs (20 % of subtotal) | \$220,000              |
| <b>Total Removal Project Ceiling</b> | <b>\$1,319,000</b>     |

\*EPA direct and indirect costs, although cost recoverable, do not count toward the removal ceiling for this removal action. Liable parties may be held financially responsible for costs incurred by the EPA as set forth in Section 107 of CERCLA.

**V. EXPECTED CHANGE IN THE SITUATION SHOULD ACTION BE DELAYED OR NOT TAKEN**

A delay in action or no action at this Site would increase the actual or potential threats to the public health and/or the environment.

**VI. ENFORCEMENT**

A separate Enforcement Addendum has been prepared providing a confidential summary of current and potential future enforcement activities.

**VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This decision document represents the selected removal action for the Glacier Hotel Asbestos Site in Cut Bank, Glacier County, Montana, developed in accordance with CERCLA as amended, and is not inconsistent with the NCP. This decision is based on the administrative record for the Site.

Conditions at the Site meet the NCP section 300.415(b) criteria for a removal action, and I recommend your approval of the proposed removal action. The total project ceiling, if approved, will be \$1,319,000; this amount will be funded from the Regional removal allowance.

APPROVE

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Ben Bielenberg  
Acting Director

Date

DISAPPROVE

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Ben Bielenberg  
Acting Director

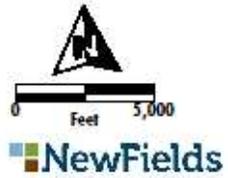
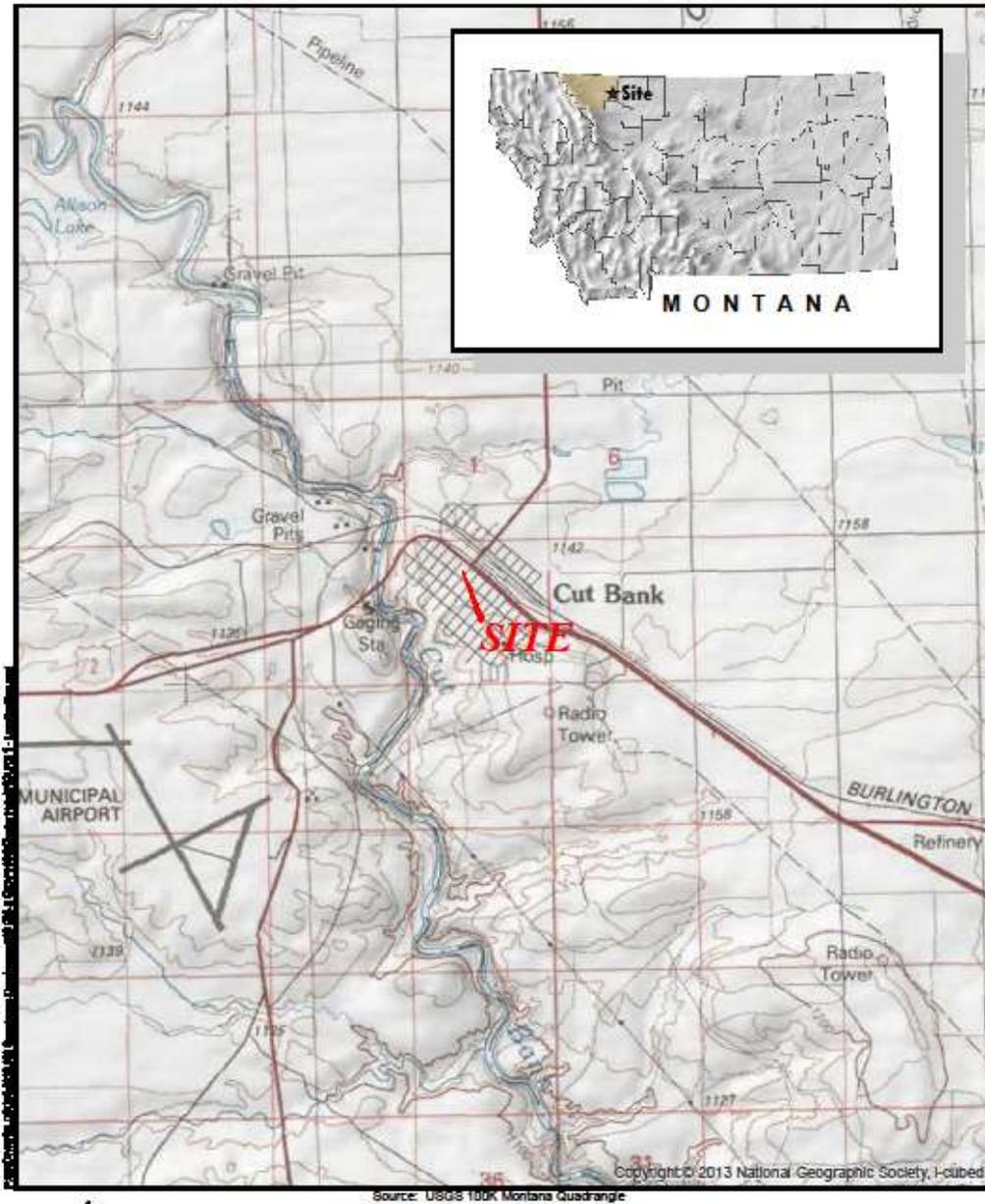
Date

**Attachments:**

- Attachment 1: Site Map
- Attachment 2: Site Photos
- Attachment 3: ARARs Table

Attachment 1

Site Map



Site Location Map  
Glacier Hotel  
15 1st Ave SW  
Cut Bank, Montana  
FIGURE 1

Attachment 2 – Site Photos







Attachment 3

ARARs Table

**ACTION SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS**

| <i>Standard, Requirement or Criteria</i>   | <i>Description</i>  | <i>Applicable or Relevant and Appropriate or TBC</i>                    | <i>Comment</i>   |
|--|---|---|--|
|  |   |   |  |
| <p>Federal regulations incorporated by reference:</p> <p>National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP), National Emission Standards for Asbestos<br/>                     40 CFR Part 61 Subpart M, 61.145(a)(3), 61.145(c)(9)</p> <p>61.150 (a)(3)</p> <p>61.150 (b)</p> <p>61.150 (c)</p> | <p>Establishes regulations for demolition of asbestos-contaminated structures</p> <p>Emission controls during demolition</p> <p>Disposal of ACM at a permitted facility</p> <p>Asbestos signage for transportation vehicles</p> | <p>Applicable</p> <p>Applicable</p> <p>Applicable</p> <p>Applicable</p> | <p>Best management practices will be implemented to comply with the regulation and protect public health, including keeping asbestos-contaminated debris adequately wet until disposed of as ACM.</p> <p>Keep ACM adequately wet</p> <p>All ACM will be transported to a landfill permitted to accept ACM</p> <p>Vehicles will be properly marked.</p> |

## CHEMICAL SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

| <i>Standard,<br/>Requirement or<br/>Criteria</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Applicable or<br/>Relevant and<br/>Appropriate or<br/>TBC</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|--|--------------------|--|----------------|
| None   |                    |  |                |

## LOCATION SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

| <i>Standard,<br/>Requirement or<br/>Criteria</i> | <i>Description</i> | <i>Applicable or<br/>Relevant and<br/>Appropriate or<br/>TBC</i> | <i>Comment</i> |
|--|--------------------|--|----------------|
| None   |                    |  |                |

