



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

MAR 27 2013

Office of
International and
Tribal Affairs

Enrique Lendo
Head of International Affairs Unit
Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT)

Dear Enrique:

I am writing to advise you that the two stacks at the American Smelting and Refining Company (ASARCO) facility in El Paso, Texas are scheduled to be demolished via a controlled implosion on Saturday, April 13, 2013. This action will bring down the two stacks within a defined exclusion zone in a matter of seconds. Similar procedures have been used successfully and safely to bring down smelter stacks throughout the United States. This action is being carried out by the contractor for the Trustee managing the ASARCO bankruptcy and facility closure. Primary oversight is being provided by the State of Texas environmental agency, the Texas Commission for Environmental Quality (TCEQ). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is also reviewing the demolition plans. No special environmental permits or licenses are required by state or federal laws.

In summary, the contractor working for the bankruptcy trustee, Project Navigator Ltd, has removed asbestos containing materials and analyzed samples of the brick and steel within the stacks for metal and organic pollutants. No elevated levels of contaminants were detected, and debris from the demolition will be handled as non-hazardous waste. Procedures include preparation of the ground and berms in the fall zone and use of water cannons to minimize dust and to restrict it to the exclusion zone. The site contractor has performed air modeling to predict the impact of dust and contaminant dispersion. Air monitors will be established around the perimeter. If all goes as planned, we do not expect any harmful impact to the surrounding communities in the U.S. or Mexico.

In order to assist Mexico more fully understand the action that will be taken and its potential impacts, the site contractor has been coordinating with local Mexican officials and sharing workplans with them. However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) believes that there are several annexes to the La Paz Agreement for environmental cooperation between the United States and Mexico that must be honored through additional communication at the federal level. Specifically, to honor provisions of Annex I (water quality), we are working through the International Boundary and Water Commission to ensure that its Mexican section, CILA is advised of potential impacts to water and groundwater and any seismic activity that might impact infrastructure. To honor Annex II (joint emergency response planning), the U.S. Chair to the Joint

Response Team (JRT), Dana Tulis, is sharing information with her Mexican counterpart, Arturo Rodriguez Abitia. And finally, to honor Annex V (Air Quality), the co-chair of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) established by the La Paz Agreement, Bill Luthans is sharing information with his counterpart Ana Maria Contreras Vigil, SEMARNAT's co-chair to the JAC and to the Air Work Group.

As mentioned, the demolition will be performed by the contractor working for the bankruptcy trustee under the lead oversight of the TCEQ. The EPA is mostly focused on reviewing materials being prepared by the contractor. These materials are being posted by the contractor to a website to help inform the public, which can be viewed at this URL site: http://www.recastingthesmelter.com/?page_id=86. There have also been meetings in El Paso and Juarez with local emergency management and planning officials in preparation for the April 13 event, including discussions on contingency planning and the clean up process. In addition, EPA managers are working with Mexico through the Border 2020 Program and La Paz Agreement to provide your managers in SEMARNAT with electronic copies of the Demolition Workplan as it is revised, including the air dispersion modeling results.

If you have any questions or need additional information regarding the ASARCO demolition, please let me know.

Sincerely



Michelle DePass
Assistant Administrator
Office of International and Tribal Affairs

cc: Francisco Moreno, PROFEPA
Arturo Rodriguez Abitia, PROFEPA
Ana Maria Contreras Vigil, SEMARNAT
Roberto Salmon, CILA
Armando Yanez, SEMARNAT
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