



Proposed Action for Operable Unit 3 Fire Preparedness Libby Asbestos Superfund Site

EPA Information Center • 108 E. 9th Street • Libby, MT 59923 • 406-293-6194

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This fact sheet describes a proposed action to provide dedicated firefighting resources for Operable Unit 3 (OU3) by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The agencies have proposed a Joint Non-Time-Critical Removal Action for Fire Preparedness in OU3 of the Libby Asbestos Superfund site.

What is a Non-Time-Critical Removal Action?

A non-time-critical removal action is a tool that can address priority risks in the Superfund process prior to a final cleanup decision.

OU3 Background:

- Duff and tree bark are contaminated with asbestos across the landscape of OU3.
- A wildland fire in OU3 would burn the asbestos contaminated forest duff and bark and concentrate the asbestos in wildfire ash.
- Firefighters could be exposed to asbestos-contaminated ash during fire response and post-firefighting mop-up activities.
- To mitigate the exposure, firefighters are specially trained and equipped with respirators and protective gear.

How is fire preparedness different in OU3 versus other forested areas?

Due to the presence of asbestos, a limited number of firefighters are trained to use protective gear, including respirators, and follow decontamination procedures in OU3.

Evaluating Fire Response Options:

An Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis has been prepared to evaluate effectiveness, implementability, and cost for alternatives being considered to reduce

asbestos exposure to fire fighters while a permanent remedy is determined for OU3.

What is the Agency's Preferred Alternative?

For this action, EPA and USFS prefer Alternative 3. Alternative 3 would allow for prioritized aerial response and a specially equipped and trained dedicated ground crew. This supports a timely and effective response to fire starts within OU3 in an effort to minimize fire spread and severity.

Summary of Alternatives

Alternative 1 – No Libby Amphibole asbestos (LA)

Exposure-related Fire Preparedness Activity: This alternative evaluates taking no LA-related fire preparedness actions in OU3. The basis for this alternative is to evaluate a “no additional action” scenario and recognizing the delayed response that would be associated with firefighting within OU3.

Alternative 2 – Aerial Response with Limited

Ground Crew Support: This alternative evaluates dedicated aerial resources for an aggressive initial attack effort above and beyond the typical response. Ground crews would serve as observers to guide aerial activities and determine the effectiveness of extinguishing the fire but would not construct fire lines or perform mop up activities.

Alternative 3 – Aerial Response with Dedicated

Ground Crew: This alternative evaluates the use of dedicated aerial resources for an aggressive initial attack effort and a dedicated ground crew. The ground crew in this alternative would be trained and equipped to safely perform firefighting duties within the OU3.

The agencies will accept public comment on the Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis (EE/CA) from April 5, 2017 through May 8, 2017.

Copies of the Engineering Evaluation and Cost Analysis and related documents are available online at www.epa.gov/superfund/libby-asbestos and at the following locations:

- EPA Information Center, 108 East 9th Street, Libby, 293-6194
- Lincoln County Library in Libby, 220 West 6th Street, 293-2778
- Lincoln County Library in Troy, 207 3rd Street, 295-4040

Please submit comments by May 8, 2017 via email to harrison.jennifer@epa.gov or mail to:

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Questions?

Contact the EPA Information Center in Libby or one of these team members:

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