

NPL Partial Site Deletion Narrative

Libby Asbestos Libby, Montana

On April 10, 2019, the EPA partially deleted the Operable Unit 2 (OU2) Former Screening Plant, of the Libby Asbestos Superfund site located in Lincoln County, Montana from the National Priorities List (NPL). This partial deletion pertains to all of OU2. All other Operable Units (OU1, OU3, OU4/OU7, OU5, OU6 and OU8) will remain on the NPL.

The Libby Asbestos site is located approximately 35 miles east of Idaho and 65 miles south of Canada in the northwest corner of Montana. The site is the location of a former vermiculite ore mine that stopped operations in 1990. The vermiculite ore (containing a mixture of amphibole mineral fibers: Libby amphibole asbestos or LA), was mined using standard strip mining techniques and conventional mining equipment. The OU2 site was owned by W.R. Grace and used for stockpiling and distributing vermiculite and vermiculite concentrate to processing areas and distributors outside of the city of Libby. OU2 is known as the Former Screening Plant and Surrounding Properties. This OU has been further divided into subareas: the Former Screening Plant (Subarea 1), Flyway (Subarea 2), Privately-Owned Property (Subarea 3), and the Rainy Creek Road Frontages (Subarea 4). The Highway 37 right-of-way was included due to its proximity to OU2 and the presence of contamination. The site was listed on the NPL on October 24, 2002, in response to extensive asbestos-related health problems in the Libby population. The asbestos contamination found in Libby Valley comes from one or some combination of source materials (e.g., vermiculite insulation, processed vermiculite ore, mine wastes). Asbestos from these source materials had been found in interior building dust samples and local soils, acting as secondary sources.

Remedial Investigations (RIs) began in 1999. From 2000 through 2006, various removal actions were conducted to excavate source areas in order to reduce exposure. In 2009 the Former Screening Plant RI evaluated the potential human health and environmental impacts, and determined that OU2 had been mostly cleaned up by prior removal actions and only two areas needed further remediation. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued by EPA on May 10, 2010 to break the exposure pathway to LA on the OU2 locations. Three remedial action objectives were identified to accomplish this goal: breaking the exposure pathway for inhalation of LA fibers, controlling erosion of contaminated soil to prevent exposures and spread contamination, and implementing controls to prevent uses of the site that could pose unacceptable risks to human health. The major remedy components were: (1) Excavation and offsite disposal of top 18 inches of soil in certain areas; (2) Protective cover of clean soil; (3) Institutional controls such as a utility location service and community awareness programs to prevent exposure and the spread of contamination; and (4) Operations and maintenance of the remedy. The selected remedy for OU2 includes institutional controls to restrict future property use to commercial and recreational purposes and to limit the actions that could pose unacceptable risks or compromise the remedy. Remedial actions began in the summer of 2010 with excavations in areas where exposure pathways needed to be broken. Materials were excavated and disposed at the former vermiculite mine (OU3). Clean cover was placed as backfill at depths of 6-25 inches depending upon location. Additional confirmation sampling was conducted in summer of 2012. The OU2 post-construction risk assessment (October 2015) and the site-wide risk assessment (November 2015) both confirmed that the remedy at OU2 is protective. W.R. Grace & Co. and the Kootenai Development Company placed an environmental covenant on its property in OU2 on July 28, 2014 that meets the IC objectives. All remedial components described in the 2010 OU2 ROD have been implemented.

The EPA in consultation with the state, Lincoln County Commissioners, and the city of Libby, has determined that all appropriate response actions under CERCLA, other than maintenance of institutional controls and five-year reviews, have been completed for OU2 at the Libby Asbestos Superfund site. Therefore, the EPA is deleting OU2 of the Libby Asbestos Superfund site from the NPL. All other Operable Units (OU1, OU3, OU4/OU7, OU5, OU6 and OU8) will remain on the NPL and will not be considered for deletion as part of this action.