



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tanapag PCB Clean-Up Status Report

(HONOLULU, March 12, 2002) -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers investigation of last month's fatal accident at the Tanapag PCB remediation project site continues.

Work was shutdown following the February 16 accident during which 3 workers were burned while performing maintenance on the internal desorption unit that treats the PCB-contaminated soil. One of the injured, Roberto Alarzar, an employee of Micronesia Woodcraft Enterprises, Inc., a subcontractor to the Corps' prime contractor, Environmental Chemical Corporation, died on February 22.

Investigations of the accident are underway by the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The Corps is working with ECC, OSHA and others to determine what happened and implement changes to ensure safe future operation of the indirect thermal desorption unit that treats the PCB-contaminated soil.

The Corps is committed to safely continuing the project and bringing it to a successful completion. Accordingly, the Corps will not permit operation of the ITD unit to resume until all necessary changes have been implemented and tested. The Corps anticipates that all safety corrections will be installed and the ITD unit will resume full operations no later than April 1.

Prior to the February 16 accident, 4,914 tons of contaminated soil was successfully treated with a lab analysis below 1 ppm of PCB.

In addition, excavation of the remaining grids in cemetery 1 and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Environmental Quality hot spots were completed, the soils sampled and the sample points surveyed. The results of EPA's and ECC's samples were all below 1 ppm PCB. The Corps awaits the test results on samples sent by EPA to its confirmation lab. When the results are confirmed backfill operations will be completed.

Dust monitoring continues on a daily basis around the job site. Air monitors for dust particles and air pumps for PCB particles are in constant use around the site. To date there have been no detectable levels of PCBs found in the air leaving the job site.

Dust control remains a key concern of the Corps. Tanapag residents and others with specific dust complaints should call Frank Ono or Kevin McCaskill at 322-8750/51/54.

The Corps will continue to provide additional information to the public as it becomes available.