



Waste Management Completes Two-Year Study Confirming Safety of PCB Handling at Kettleman Hills Facility

Jan 13, 2011

\$800,000 Study Coordinated with U.S. EPA

KETTLEMAN CITY, Calif., Jan. 13, 2011 /PRNewswire via COMTEX/ --

Waste Management of the Central Valley today announced that Wenck Associates, Inc. has completed an extensive PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) study at WM's Kettleman Hills Facility, which found that PCBs treated, stored and disposed at the facility do not have an adverse impact on human health or the environment.

"The evaluation done of PCBs in soil in the Kettleman Hills Facility in conjunction with U.S. EPA was unusual in its level of complexity, thoroughness and comprehensiveness," said Dr. Arthur L. Frank, Professor of Public Health and Chair, Department of Occupational Health at Drexel University School of Public Health. "For a Toxic Substances Control Act permitted site, this evaluation went far beyond what has been done at other such sites, and is among the most complete assessment ever performed," he said.

The study focused on measuring 12 PCB congeners identified by the World Health Organization as having dioxin-like properties. Soil, air and vegetation were sampled within the landfill property boundary where, due to proximity, potential risks would be highest. The study's goal was to assess the worst-case potential human health and ecological risks within and outside the landfill boundaries that could be associated with the handling and disposal of PCB wastes.

"The study shows that the low levels of PCBs detected in soils within the boundary of the Kettleman Hills Facility are similar to levels that have been found in many remote and rural areas throughout the country where there has been no industrial activity," said Brian Bowen, director of environmental protection for Waste Management. "We worked closely with U.S. EPA to employ very conservative methodologies to ensure that potential risks were not underestimated so the community could be confident in the findings."

Risk calculations were performed using data collected from air, soil, and vegetation within the facility property boundary and in accordance with sampling and verification protocols required by U.S. EPA Region IX. Air monitoring was conducted over a one-year period and included more than 15,000 hours of data measured from multiple air-monitoring stations approved by U.S. EPA.

Bowen added that all sections of the draft report were reviewed and commented on by U.S. EPA staff. The final report reflects EPA's comments.

Key findings of the study include:

- Potential human health risks for a rancher working right at the landfill border are 100 times lower than U.S. EPA and Cal-EPA target risk levels;
- Potential human health risks for hypothetical "worst-case" scenarios of residents living for decades right at the landfill border and consuming food grown and raised on the border property do not exceed U.S. EPA's target risk range of concern;
- The calculated potential risks associated with exposures to PCBs at the border of the facility would be even lower farther from the facility;
- Potential risks to wildlife are more than ten times lower than ecological target risk levels;
- The concentration of PCBs found in soil at the landfill are similar to those measured elsewhere in the country, including in rural soils located away from industrial land uses and even in remote wilderness areas.

PCBs are very stable, but require careful handling. Waste Management of the Central Valley's Kettleman Hills Facility has a permitted PCB waste landfill and is a permitted PCB commercial storage facility under the Toxic Substances Control Act. PCBs represent less than two percent of the materials the facility handles. The Kettleman Hills Facility primarily processes PCBs from transformers, capacitors and contaminated soils.

"The conclusions of the PCB study are consistent with the draft findings of the State's Environmental Exposure Assessment and support our 30-year history of operating the site in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. We hope this study is reassuring for residents of Kettleman City," Bowen said.

To view the EPA's fact sheet, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/region9/kettleman/index.html#congener>

To view the executive summary of the study, visit <http://www.kettlemanhillsfacts.com>

About Waste Management

Waste Management of the Central Valley's Kettleman Hills Facility has been an integral part of the Kings County Community for more than 31 years. The facility is permitted to handle municipal solid waste and hazardous waste, both of which are heavily regulated, monitored and controlled by more than 10 local, state and federal government agencies. The facility's staff includes 60 full-time employees, many of whom are active in the community. In addition to its community contributions and significant volunteer efforts, Waste Management provides a benefit to the local economy of more than \$14 million annually with a \$3.5 million annual payroll. WM also contributes nearly \$2 million per year directly to the Kings County General Fund through disposal fees. For more information, visit our website at www.kettlemanhillsfacts.com.

SOURCE Waste Management