

Bulletin

Getting the Lead Out

EPA Acting to Prevent Childhood Lead Poisoning

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Lead poisoning is a serious health problem, particularly among young children. A high blood lead level can lower a child's intelligence, impair his or her hearing, retard physical and mental growth, and cause memory loss or hyperactivity. EPA estimates that one in six U.S. children under six years old have high levels of lead in their blood.

Lead-based paint is a major source of exposure for these children. Urban soil and dust are also sometimes contaminated with lead from paint, gasoline, and industrial sources. Drinking water can contain lead from solder, brass fittings, and service lines. Most of the lead in these sources is a remnant from the past. Over the past 20 years, the nation switched to unleaded gasoline, paint manufacturers were banned from using lead in residential products, and the use of lead in the solder and pipes of public drinking water systems was banned.

Federal agencies take action

While much has been accomplished, much remains to be done. By 1989, it was clear that additional action was necessary, both to protect people from exposure to lead left in the environment from previous uses *and* to prevent exposures to lead from current uses. To tackle the number one problem—children's exposure to lead-based paint—EPA joined the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in organizing a federal interagency task force. Today, 18 federal organizations participate in the task force, cooperating on many projects and sharing information about many others.

In 1991, EPA completed a comprehensive strategy for dealing with expo-

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3 DAYS ONLY

Four Jailed for Illegal Disposal of PCBs

Weaver Electric Pleads Guilty to Violations

Four people were incarcerated for illegally disposing of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) at a Colorado horse ranch and in some trailers in Texas. The PCBs came from Weaver Electric Company, which was fined \$200,000 for its role in the case.

Weaver Electric buys, refurbishes, and sells used electric equipment. In this business, Weaver Electric accumulated transformers and capacitors, which contain PCBs, and PCB-containing liquids. In 1988, Larry Pizer, president of Weaver Electric, directed plant manager Clayton Regier to ask the owners of a nearby horse ranch to remove PCBs from the company's Denver plant. Ranch owners Michael and Martha Slusser agreed to do so and hired a salvage operator to transport about 576 capacitors and 176 55-gallon drums of PCB liquids to their ranch. Mr. Pizer directed Mr. Regier to remove the drums' PCB markings prior to their transport.

The salvage operator and Mr. Slusser buried the capacitors on the ranch. The drums, which contained liquids with PCB concentrations of 500 parts per million or more, were stored for a time in a barn with a dirt floor. Some of the liquids spilled and leaked onto the ground. Later, Mrs. Slusser arranged for the drums to be transported to El Paso, Texas, where they were left in trailers at two sites.

Wrongdoing uncovered

These activities were uncovered by an EPA investigation begun after an employee of Weaver Electric revealed the company had submitted false reports to the agency about disposal of PCBs.

In July 1990, EPA's regional office in Denver began removing the PCBs and remedying the ranch site. In October 1990, EPA's regional office in Dallas, Texas, started cleaning up one of the trailer sites. EPA has spent almost \$1 million on the cleanups.

As a result of EPA's investigation into Weaver Electric's illegal handling of PCBs, the federal government in 1989 suspended Mr. Pizer and Weaver Electric from submitting bids for federal government surplus equipment. The company had purchased about 20 percent of its electrical equipment for refurbishing and resale from the federal government. In 1990, however, Weaver Electric, under Mr. Pizer's direction, bid for equipment using the name of a fictitious company. Weaver Electric was successful in purchasing surplus equipment in this way on two occasions.

Guilty pleas entered

This case involved violations of PCB regulations under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and reporting violations under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Lia-

bility Act (CERCLA). TSCA requires that PCBs be disposed of properly. CERCLA requires that the release of PCBs into the environment be reported to the government.

On November 6, 1992, in the U.S. District Court in Colorado, all the defendants pleaded guilty to charges of illegally disposing of PCBs. Michael Slusser also pleaded guilty to failure to report the release of a hazardous substance. Clayton Regier and Weaver Electric pleaded guilty to failure to mark PCB containers and capacitors. Weaver Electric also pleaded guilty to making false statements and creating a false document for the purpose of defrauding the United States. Weaver Electric president Larry Pizer died before the case went to court. The other defendants' sentences follow.

- Plant manager Clayton Regier and salvage operator Bud Rupe were each sentenced to five months in a federal institution and one year of supervised release, of which they will each spend five months in electronically monitored home detention. The defendants were also ordered to each pay \$5,000 to EPA's Superfund Fund for the costs incurred in the PCB cleanups.
- Ranch owner Martha Slusser received two sentences of 90

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Send All Correspondence to

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days, to be served concurrently, and one-year of supervised release. She was also ordered to pay \$5,000 to EPA's Superfund Fund. Her husband, Michael Slusser, received two sentences of one year and one day, to be served concurrently.

- Weaver Electric Company was ordered to pay a \$200,000 fine and was placed on five years' probation. Weaver Electric was also ordered to spend an additional \$300,000 for environmental remediation for its Denver facilities and to pay \$1,025 in special assessment fees.