



NEVADA DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION NEWS RELEASE

STATE TO ENHANCE NEVADA MERCURY CONTROL PROGRAM

CARSON CITY—The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection is moving forward with the development of an enhanced Nevada Mercury Control Program for air emissions from metal mining operations.

While a federal standard for mercury air emissions from metal mining operations has never been set, in 2002 the NDEP along with US Environmental Protection Agency developed a voluntary program to reduce mercury air emissions from these operations. According to EPA, in the first three years of the program, mercury air emissions from Nevada metal mining operations were reduced by 75 percent.

“NDEP recognizes that mercury is a highly toxic and persistent pollutant and efforts need to be made to control mercury air emissions from metal mining operations to the maximum extent practicable,” NDEP Chief, Bureau of Air Pollution Control Michael Elges said. “If we had waited for a federal standard, it would still be many years before the standards would be in place and any reductions achieved. The Nevada program has been highly successful in achieving reduced mercury air emissions to date and we want to expand the program to achieve additional controls.”

NDEP and EPA are currently focused on four major enhancements to the program: increasing participation by metal mining operations in the mercury control program, ensuring adequate monitoring and reporting, seeking further improvements in current control technologies and identifying additional points where controls could be applied. A draft of the enhanced Nevada Mercury Control Program is anticipated by the end of this year.

While the health effects of mercury are well known and concerns have been expressed about elevated levels of mercury in the West, there is limited peer-reviewed research to help the NDEP understand the way that mercury air emissions move through the environment. Even without such data, the NDEP remains focused on its goal to control mercury air emissions and to minimize impacts to the environment.

NDEP Deputy Administrator Colleen Cripps said, “regardless of where the impact occurs, whether globally, regionally or locally, we’re doing everything that we can to control mercury air emissions in Nevada.”

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