



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

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EPA Announces a Public Phone Line and Website for Residents in Fairmont, West Virginia

Roll Out of Hotline and Website to Support
Transparency and Inform the Public about Fairmont Brine
Processing Site

PHILADELPHIA (October 19, 2023) – Beginning Monday, October 23, 2023, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Mid-Atlantic Region (EPA) will open a public phone line and roll-out a webpage to increase transparency and inform the public about the Fairmont Brine site in Fairmont, West Virginia, where state and federal agencies are working to secure the site and control any potential release of hazardous materials.

The site was acquired by Fairmont Brine Processing (FBP) in 2012 and has been inactive since 2017. FBP would treat fluids from the hydraulic fracturing process used to extract natural gas, otherwise known as "brine." In May 2023, there was a fire and explosion at the site that led to increased concern about the potential release of contamination.

EPA is coordinating with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WV DEP), West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (WV DHHR), Marion County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, and others to ensure a unified response to protect the public. EPA's response will focus on radionuclides in the form of TENORM (Technologically Enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material). TENORM is a naturally occurring radioactive material that has been concentrated or exposed to the environment because of human activities such as manufacturing, mineral extraction, or water processing.

EPA, DHHR, and WVDEP have been on-site to evaluate emergency actions needed to stabilize the site and will be doing a thorough evaluation of any contamination releases to the environment. EPA will also secure the site to prevent unauthorized access and potential exposure to the public. The agency and its contractor have implemented security measures at the front entrance and lower complex including interim barriers and NO TRESPASSING signage and are planning to fence off the area soon. The response team will regularly be on site to perform work, which should further deter public access.

DHHR, on behalf of the State, has coordinated with the Marion County Sheriff's Department to increase patrols around the site.

The WVDEP and DHHR have worked with FBP to take precautions to prevent radionuclides from leaving the site, including enforcement action, and implementing a plan of corrective action to remove waste material and prevent onsite ponds from overflowing.

EPA understands the need for certainty and clear information regarding the Fairmont Brine site and has developed a Joint Information Center (JIC) involving all responding agencies. The JIC will work together to coordinate effective communication with the public. The Fairmont Brine site public phone line, website, and formation of a JIC are a testament to EPA's commitment to providing the public with accurate and timely information.

Please visit the response website at www.response.epa.gov/fairmontbrine or call the public phone line at (800) 438-2474. The phone line will be staffed Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST. If you are unable to reach someone, please leave a voicemail, and an EPA representative will return your call as soon as possible.

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