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# NEWS RELEASE

***Dec. 3, 2010 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

## **City Cited by OSHA for September Mercury Spill**

DUBUQUE, Iowa – The Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently issued three citations against the City of Dubuque Water Pollution Control Plant in relation to a small quantity of mercury spilled during a deconstruction project at the plant in September.

The first citation, considered a “serious” violation, states, “Prior to permitting employees to start demolition operations, when the presence of any hazardous substances was apparent or suspected, testing and purging was not performed and the hazard eliminated before demolition was started.” This violation carries a proposed penalty of \$1,375. The City is in the process of contesting this finding.

The second citation states, “The written emergency plan was not kept at the workplace and made available for employee review.” There is no proposed penalty for this violation.

The third citation states, “The employer’s hazard communication program did not include methods the employer will use to inform the other employer(s) of any precautionary measures that need to be taken to protect employees during the workplace’s normal operating conditions and in foreseeable emergencies.” This violation carries a proposed penalty of \$550.

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### **BACKGROUND NEWS RELEASE FROM OCTOBER 8, 2010**

On Thursday, Sept. 23, a spill of approximately two tablespoons of mercury occurred at the Dubuque Water Pollution Control Plant Renovation Project during deconstruction of the plant’s trickling filters. There is no threat to public health and preventative measures have

been taken to contain the mercury at the location of the spill while mitigation activities are conducted.

The spill occurred at approximately 10:30 a.m. on Sept. 23 while a trickling filter bearing housing which contained a mercury seal was being moved by contractors. Within an hour, a hazardous materials abatement contractor was asked to respond to the site and within three hours was on site assessing the situation. A contract was executed with a hazardous materials and emergency response contractor by 5 p.m. that day and the contractor was on site to begin mitigation work by 7 a.m. the next morning. Mitigation work to safely remove the mercury continues.

The spill was limited to the plant's two trickling filters, which are large concrete reservoirs filled with aggregate. The spilled mercury is contained in these reservoirs and preventative measures have been taken to ensure that the mercury does not enter the plant system, reach any waterways, or leave the site.

All appropriate agencies have since been notified of the incident and state officials have visited the site. Officials from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration (IOSH) are investigating the incident.

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