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EPA Orders Battery Recycling Company to Reduce Air and Water Pollution at Arecibo, Puerto Rico Lead Smelting Facility

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(New York, N.Y.) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has taken legal action against the **Battery Recycling** Company, Inc. requiring the company to take multiple actions to reduce the pollution of air and water from lead at its **Arecibo**, Puerto Rico facility. EPA's ongoing investigation of the facility found potential violations of the federal Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. The **Battery Recycling** Company, a secondary lead smelter, recycles used motor vehicle batteries and produces approximately 60 tons of lead per day.

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause damage to a child's ability to learn and a range of health damage in adults. Lead exposure can have serious, long-term health consequences in adults and children. Even at low levels, lead in children can cause I.Q. deficiencies, reading and learning disabilities, impaired hearing, reduced attention spans, hyperactivity and other behavior problems. Lead exposure can also cause health problems in pregnant women and harm fetuses.

"It is vitally important that the **Battery Recycling** Company control the lead that is escaping into the air and water from its industrial facility to protect the health of facility workers, their families and the people who live in the area," said EPA Regional Administrator Judith A. Enck. "The EPA legal action requires the **Battery Recycling** Company to improve its operations to protect people's health and the environment. Our work is not done. EPA's evaluation of the company's compliance with federal environmental laws is active and ongoing."


"As an entity regulated by EQB and EPA, **Battery Recycling** must fully and timely comply with all applicable regulations. Today's order reflects the work done by EPA, EQB, and other government agencies to ensure compliance," said Pedro J. Nieves Miranda, Chairman of Puerto Rico Environmental Quality Board. "We will continue working to protect the well being of the **Arecibo** community, **Battery** employees, their families and the environment".

To address air pollution, one EPA order, issued August 10, 2011, requires improved monitoring and reporting, preventative actions and operational improvements by the company. EPA's investigation found that in 2007, the company reconstructed and tested a furnace at its facility without properly notifying EPA. The company built another furnace in 2010 and informed EPA, but failed to notify the agency of its testing of pollution control equipment. In both cases, the company failed to notify EPA of the date the furnaces went into operation. These notifications are important because physical and operational changes potentially increased the amount of pollution the facility generates. The company also failed to provide EPA with required records and reports. In addition, EPA found that the system for detecting leaks of lead emissions was not being properly operated to detect soot. One of the revolving doors on the dust collection system, called a baghouse, was not functioning at full capacity and potentially allowed dust to escape into the air.

EPA's order requires the company to properly operate its leak detection system immediately to detect and reduce dust from escaping into the air. The company must conduct daily lead monitoring of the lead levels at its baghouse and record and report these levels to EPA. The company has also been ordered to provide EPA the results of 2010 performance tests conducted on the air pollution control devices associated with two of its furnaces, and to update its plans and procedures for addressing pollution from its smelting operations and provide them to EPA.

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To address water pollution, under a second order issued July 13, 2011, EPA required the company to improve the way it manages run-off from rainwater and correct violations of the federal Clean Water Act. Storm water from rainfall can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants before it flows into a water body. The facility discharges storm water into the Caño Vieques, which flows into Caño Tiburones and eventually empties into the Atlantic Ocean. At the time of EPA's inspection, the **Battery Recycling** Company did not have the required storm water pollution prevention plan available, and did not have the required records related to monitoring, sampling, inspections and training. Industrial materials and operations were not protected from rain and the exposed areas were not clean or in order. Additionally, the facility failed to carry out best management practices to control storm water runoff at its site.

The EPA order on water pollution requires multiple preventative and pollution management actions by the company. The company has been ordered to produce copies of the required storm water pollution prevention plan, and annual reports, inspection, monitoring, training records and other required documentation. The company has also been ordered to develop a plan to comply with environmental regulations related to storm water management and follow best management practices to control storm water runoff. In addition, the **Battery Recycling** Company has been ordered to identify and control water pollution unrelated to storm water runoff in areas including the repair shop, and storage and loading areas. Last, the facility has been ordered to report on its progress to EPA on a quarterly basis.

The orders are the latest in a series of actions EPA has taken to protect people's health and the environment in **Arecibo**. EPA will continue to work with the company and federal, Commonwealth and local officials to develop a long-term solution to the lead problems in **Arecibo**, and will keep the community fully informed.

To learn more about EPA's efforts to reduce lead risks, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/lead>.

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