



EPA to Hold Community Meetings On Puna Emergency Response Plans

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will conduct an independent review of the emergency response plans for the Puna Geothermal Venture (PGV) facility and Hawaii County August 5-9, 1996.

The purpose of the project is to provide an independent review and evaluation of the emergency response plans, with the long-term objective of preventing chemical accidents and improving emergency response capabilities. The review is being conducted as a follow-up to EPA's 1995 compliance inspection of the PGV facility and in response to a request from community members.

As part of the week-long review, EPA will hold two public meetings to hear community concerns and questions about the emergency response plans. The meetings will be Wednesday, August 7 in Pahoa and Thursday, August 8 in Hilo (see box below for details).

The review team is comprised of three technical experts from outside EPA, with assistance from EPA staff who have experience with emergency preparedness programs and safety audits. Prior to the Hawaii visit, the team will complete a review of the PGV and Hawaii County plans. During the week of the review,

they will meet with state agencies, including the Hawaii Department of Health and Hawaii State Civil Defense. The team will also meet with representatives of county and local emergency response agencies on the Big Island and will visit the PGV facility.

Puna Emergency Response Plans

The most recent update of PGV's emergency response plan was submitted to Hawaii County on January 30, 1996, as required under the Geothermal Resource Permit. The permit requires a plan of action to deal with facility emergency situations which may threaten the health, safety and welfare of employees and persons in the vicinity of the site.

The County of Hawaii Emergency Operations Plan (all hazards plan) was prepared by Hawaii State Civil Defense with assistance from Hawaii County. The most recent version of the plan received by EPA is dated 1989. An addendum to the plan for Geothermal Incident Standard Operating Procedures was submitted July 30, 1992. In addition, the Hawaii County Fire Department has a two-page plan for emergency response to incidents at the PGV facility.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will hold two public meetings to discuss the independent review of the emergency response plans for PGV and Hawaii County. You are invited to attend, ask questions and make comments about those plans. The meetings will be at the following times and locations:

4:30 - 7:30 PM
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 1996
PAHOA COMMUNITY CENTER
KAUHALE ST.
PAHOA

6:00 - 9:00 PM
THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 1996
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII, HILO CAMPUS CENTER
200 W. KAWILI ST.
HILO

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The public meetings will be an opportunity for community members to ask questions about the independent review, and to raise issues and concerns they would like the review team to consider. The two meetings will have identical formats and are being held in different locations on separate evenings for the convenience of the public. Interested persons may attend the meeting of their choice. In addition to attending the meetings, the public may submit written comments or questions about the emergency response plans to the U.S. EPA by August 30, 1996 (see address below).

YOU MAY SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS
OR QUESTIONS BY

AUGUST 30, 1996 TO:

MICHAEL ARDITO, H-8-1

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
75 HAWTHORNE ST.
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

Following the review, EPA will compile a report of findings and recommendations from the independent review team and will distribute the draft report to community groups, PGV, and local, county and state officials for review and comment. Release of the draft report is scheduled for early 1997, with completion of the final report tentatively scheduled for spring 1997.

MEMBERS OF THE TEAM:

- Dr. Paul Hill, executive director of the National Institute of Chemical Studies, Charleston, WV
- Mark Zusy, supervisor of the Chemical Accident Prevention Program, Nevada Department of Environmental Protection
- Randy Sawyer, manager of the Risk Management Prevention Program, Contra Costa County, CA

EPA STAFF:

- Michael Ardito, project officer for Hawaii Superfund programs
- Ake Jacobson, member of the EPA Region 9 chemical safety audit team

SITE BACKGROUND

The Puna Geothermal Venture facility produces electricity using geothermal fluids (steam). The PGV facility occupies approximately 25 acres within a 500-acre leased property and employs 40 people. PGV is located about 20 miles south of Hilo, Hawaii.

The geothermal fluids are produced as circulating ground water is heated to above 200 degrees Celsius by subsurface molten rock. Two production wells extract the fluids which are separated into steam and brine phases. The steam is routed to turbines to produce energy. Steam condensate is combined with the brine and noncondensable gasses, and disposed into three injection wells.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on EPA's review of the emergency response plans for PGV and Hawaii County, contact:

Michael Ardito, project manager
(415) 744-2328

You may also call EPA's Region 9 Superfund toll-free message line
at **(800) 231-3075**.