



# EPA RESPONDS TO CHEMICAL RELEASE AT ROMIC FACILITY

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Region 9

East Palo Alto, CA

June 2006

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been assessing the impact of a June 5<sup>th</sup> chemical release from a tanker truck at the Romic facility on Bay Road. Approximately 4,000 gallons of used mixed solvents began reacting inside the tanker and were then released as a fine mist that settled over adjacent areas including a wetland. The contents of the tanker consisted of volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds (VOCs) -- hydroxylamine, monoethanolamine, toluene and acetonitrile -- used solvents blended onsite at Romic. Following the release, a shelter-in-place advisory was issued to nearby neighborhoods as a precaution.

## What EPA Has Learned About the Release

EPA sampling results show that the mist released contained VOCs. VOCs are compounds that are easily turned into vapor and dissipate quickly into the air, which means they get smaller and smaller until they are completely gone. Water was also present in the tanker in the form of a bio-sludge which is part of the process waste. The bio-sludge was added to the tanker along with used solvents blended onsite. A reaction occurred inside the tanker and liquid vapor was released into the air several hours later. As the VOCs dissipated, a sticky residue was left on areas adjacent to the facility including a marsh.

## Was the Release Harmful to People or the Environment?

Although exposure to VOCs was the primary health concern, the release of the VOCs had no effect on nearby neighborhoods or residents due to the fact that the chemicals dissipated so quickly into the air. As for the sticky residue left on the ground, this substance is not likely to be harmful unless one comes into direct contact with the material. Additional tests are being conducted on the residue to determine any hazard. The residue affected the portion of Bay Road in front of the Romic facility. This area has been cleaned up and reopened. The residue affected only one other area that has public access, the wetland/marsh area to the south of Cooley Landing. Other areas affected are private industrial properties. Results from EPA's residential air monitoring are expected on Monday, June 12. Sampling of the wetland is currently underway with results expected later that same week.

## For More Information

If you have questions or concerns about the release of hazardous substances at the Romic facility, please contact any of the people listed below:

### Janet Yocum

On-Scene Coordinator  
U.S. EPA  
75 Hawthorne St. (SFD-9-2)  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 972-3053  
yocum.janet@epa.gov

### Vicki Rosen

Community Involvement Coordinator  
U.S. EPA  
75 Hawthorne St. (SFD-3)  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
(415) 972-3244  
rosen.vicki@epa.gov

### Debbie Schechter

Environmental and Economic  
Development Coordinator  
City of East Palo Alto  
2415 University Ave., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303  
(650) 853-3122  
schechter.debbie@epa.gov