

COMPANY LINE

PG&E Settles More Chromium Claims

In early February, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) announced it had reached a \$295 million legal settlement to resolve litigation related to the use of chromium at three of the company's gas compressor stations from the 1950s to 1970s. The settlement resolved more than 10 years of litigation and brought closure to substantially all of the outstanding chromium-related claims against PG&E, the company said. The case was made famous by the film "Erin Brockovich."

A news release from PG&E stated that, "This case resulted from events that occurred many decades ago. In the 1960s, some PG&E workers became aware that chromium was present in groundwater wells near our operations and, regrettably, the facts suggest that they did not share that information with others in the company or the public at the time.

"Clearly, this situation should never have happened, and we are sorry that it did. It is not the way we do business, and we believe it would not happen in our company today. In 1987, when we discovered what had happened, we acted immediately to address the problem."

The company acknowledged that not all differences between the plaintiffs and PG&E were resolved with the settlement; the primary differences concern the health effects of chromium.

Chromium was added to cooling water to reduce corrosion at compressor stations in Mojave Desert towns such as Hinkley and Kettleman Hills. Excess water was stored in unlined retention ponds, from where it drained into the underlying aquifer, contaminating local water supplies.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the plaintiffs claimed that up to 140 times the federal standard for chromium in drinking water was measured in Hinkley's supply, and was responsible

for the cluster of cancer cases in children from that area. In 1996, PG&E paid \$333 million to 650 people; the recent settlement covered an additional 1,100 cases, the newspaper reported.

Visit www.pge.com and www.latimes.com.

Carollo, CH2M Hill Honored by ACEC-AZ

Carollo Engineers and CH2M Hill were two of ten winners of the 2005 Grand Award given by the American Council of Engineering Companies of Arizona last fall. These two companies were recognized for their water-related engineering projects.

Fountain Valley, California-based Carollo Engineers was honored for its design of Yuma's Desert Dunes Water Reclamation Facility. The facility was noted both for its ability to blend into the residential neighborhood where it is located and its flexibility to expand from a current capacity of 3 million gallons per day (mgd) up to 12 mgd in the future.

CH2M Hill was recognized for its engineering infrastructure at the Rio Salado Environmental Restoration Project in Phoenix. The infrastructure supports the establishment and maintenance of a riparian habitat, provides a 100-year flood capacity in the river channel, and also offers opportunities for public interaction.

Visit www.acecaz.org.

Wallingford Upgrades FloodWorks

Wallingford Software recently released version 5.0 of FloodWorks, a real-time flood forecasting and flood warning system. The most significant improvement of this version is that it can automatically publish flood forecasts on a website for viewing by remote users via a standard web browser.

According to the company, FloodWorks provides real-time simulation and forecasting of hydrological and hydraulic

conditions within river basins, drainage systems, and coastal zones. The software is considered particularly effective for real-time flood management because it provides forecasts of water level, flood depth, and sea state for the hours or days ahead, and automatically disseminates detailed flood warnings.

As with earlier versions, FloodWorks can send out warning information by fax, e-mail, or SMS to a specified list of parties when certain critical conditions or levels were reached. In addition, it is now simple to publish the latest flood forecasts to a website and to provide access to authorized users. This feature allows more detail to be made available than can be contained in a text message and information can be updated more frequently.

Visit www.wallingfordsoftware.com.

HDR Poster Displays Drinking Water Standards

HDR Inc. has released a free, updated, easy-to-use reference poster of federal drinking water regulations, including a detailed list of contaminants and maximum contaminant levels, health effects, and monitoring requirements. This 11th edition of the poster focuses on simultaneous compliance with multiple regulations, including EPA's new Stage 2 Disinfectants and Disinfection Byproducts and Long Term 2 Enhanced Surface Water Treatment rules.

Request or download the poster at www.hdrinc.com/SDWA/.

Geomatrix Adds Air Quality Services

The Geomatrix office in Phoenix recently added air quality as a core practice area with the hiring of Ron Vernesoni as a senior air quality engineer. Vernesoni has more than 30 years of public- and private-sector experience in air quality.

Visit www.geomatrix.com.