



Emmet County News Release

For immediate release – Feb. 5, 2021

Unintended discharge of Solberg Artic 3% PFOS-free synthetic firefighting foam

On Jan. 27, 2021, while conducting tests on one of the airport's fire trucks, an unintended discharge of firefighting foam occurred at Pellston Regional Airport grounds. The release occurred in an area already known to have aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) impact from previous investigative efforts. With the ground being frozen, the AFFF is not expected to leach to the ground water levels at this time.

Airport Rescue Fire Fighters (ARFF) are required by FAA regulations to test the onsite fire trucks, to ensure that they are in good operational condition and ready in the event of a crash. Pellston ARFF Inc., the company Emmet County contracts with to handle any firefighting incidences at the Pellston airport, was using an Ecologic foam testing mobile cart (E-One) to assess water flow in a 2000 Oshkosh T-1500 crash truck.

ARFF employees were running the tests in five-second intervals to purge the lines of air to see if the meter was operating correctly. Approximately 10 seconds after starting the test, a foam mixture was seen being discharged from the roof turret of the firefighting truck and the test was immediately shut down. Pellston ARFF estimated that approximately one gallon of Solberg Arctic 3% PFOS-free synthetic firefighting foam concentrate was discharged with the foam and water mixture on to the pavement and snow covered area that is designed for the collection of surface water run-off, south of the ARFF building. This area already contains a monitoring well from previous investigative efforts.

Emmet County Administrator Michael Reaves was notified late in the afternoon hours of January 27, 2021 of the incident, and he immediately consulted with current airport consultants, on actions needed to address this release, so that the processes of investigation, notification, mitigation and remediation of the incident could rapidly begin. Administrator Reaves also notified department officials of the Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) – Gaylord District Office, which included EGLE supervisor Randall L. Rothe.

Rothe made the necessary notifications of other Michigan departmental staff that include EGLE remediation and redevelopment division members, Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART), Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) Aeronautics staff and the State Fire Marshall office. Both Emmet County staff and ancillary assisting entities, along with EGLE staff and other stated Michigan departments and officials, are working together to address and mitigate/remediate this incident. Cleanup efforts will include additional levels of testing in the areas affected, along with

removal of areas of soil, grass or snow that were exposed to the liquid. Additionally, the containment of any cleaning solutions, water, snow or ground surface areas will be prepared for proper disposal under EGLE guidelines.

Administrator Reaves and the Emmet County Commissioners, along with state of Michigan officials, wanted to inform the public the incident had occurred and assure local residents that Emmet County officials immediately prepared mitigation and remediation plans and put them into action, with the concurrence of, and under the guidelines given by EGLE staff members.

Both Rothe and Reaves, along with testing engineers will monitor and report the findings of additional testing that is already occurring in the immediate area. These results will be reported to EGLE as required.

“The ability of both state and local governments to quickly work together in incidents like these is imperative to quick resolution and results,” stated Reaves, who also thanked Rothe for the cooperation and assistance he offered, along with the other state agencies that were notified and assisted in regards to this incident.

“We appreciate Emmet County’s response and notifications to us concerning the unintentional release of the newer AFFF foams,” Rothe said. “These are shorter-chain PFAS, and not known presently to cause long-term effects to the public, environment and ecological systems. We are working cooperatively with Emmet County to deal with this new release. Given it is in an area already known to contain the older PFAS and with the ground being frozen at the time, we are pleased with their planned response to deal with the removal of soil, and cleaning of hard surfaces that may have been impacted by this unintentional release, to prevent run-off from reaching the groundwater. We are all committed to long-term efforts to deal with all releases from AFFF foam at the Pellston Regional Airport.”

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For questions regarding this news release, please contact:

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- Randall Rothe, EGLE District Supervisor – Gaylord office, rother@michigan.gov