

# ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

# Mercury Management

“DNSC is responsible for providing safe, secure, and environmentally sound storage for the national defense stockpile.”

**Cornel Holder, Administrator,**  
Defense National Stockpile Center

## Mercury Management Alternatives

**T**he Defense National Stockpile Center (DNSC) is preparing a Mercury Management Environmental Impact Statement (MM EIS) that analyzes the environmental impacts of three alternative approaches for the long term management of DNSC’s elemental mercury:

- Consolidation of the mercury inventory at one location
- Resumption of mercury sales
- No action, i.e., maintaining mercury storage at existing sites

## Consolidated Storage is DNSC’s Preferred Alternative

Based on a combination of environmental, economic and technical factors, policy considerations, and public comment, DNSC’s Preferred Alternative for mercury management is long-term, consolidated storage at one site. The term ‘Preferred Alternative’ means that, at this time, DNSC believes that storing the mercury at one site is the best way to meet its objectives. Managing the mercury at one site would simplify mercury storage operations and reduce costs. No final decision will be made until after the public has commented on the Draft MM EIS and comments have been addressed in the Final MM EIS.

The Draft MM EIS analyzes the environmental impacts of consolidated storage at six potential sites: three existing DNSC storage depots and three additional sites that present a wide variety of environmental conditions. Because they are in different parts of the United States, they also allow analysis of a range of transportation impacts. The sites are:

- New Haven Depot, New Haven, Indiana
- Somerville Depot, Hillsborough, New Jersey
- Warren Depot, Warren, Ohio
- Utah Industrial Depot, Tooele, Utah
- Hawthorne Army Depot, Hawthorne, Nevada
- PEZ Lake Development, Romulus, New York

If the Consolidated Storage Alternative is selected in the Record of Decision for the MM EIS, DNSC may conduct a competitive procurement among interested sites. Based on the results of that process and the information analyzed in the EIS, DNSC would then select a mercury storage site. In all cases, DNSC will remain the owner of the mercury under a business partnership agreement with storage site operators who would be paid for their services.

## Sales Alternative

This alternative involves the resumption of mercury sales at a rate that is unlikely to unduly disrupt the world market. DNSC voluntarily halted sales in 1994 because of concerns about

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**U.S. mail:**  
*Attention: Project Manager  
Mercury Management EIS  
DNSC-E  
Defense National Stockpile Center  
8725 John F. Kingman Road  
Suite 3229  
Ft. Belvoir, VA 22060-6223  
toll free: (888) 306-6682  
toll free fax: (888) 306-8818  
e-mail: [information@mercuryeis.com](mailto:information@mercuryeis.com)  
website: [www.mercuryeis.com](http://www.mercuryeis.com)*

mercury accumulation in the global environment. Under the sales alternative, DNSC mercury would be sold from existing storage locations and buyers would be responsible for the safe transport of purchased mercury. If this alternative is selected, the Market Impact Committee, an entity composed of representatives from several federal agencies, would determine the actual quantity of mercury that would be sold each year. This information would be published in the *Federal Register* for public comment.

The mercury could be sold to commodity brokers; producers, such as mercury mining and refining companies and companies that recover and reclaim mercury. It could also be sold to chemical processing companies such as those in the chloralkali industry, and manufacturers that use mercury in products such as lighting and light switches, medical equipment,

and dental amalgam. Or, the entire inventory could be sold to an overseas mining company with the understanding that the environmental impacts of mining would be reduced to compensate for the release of the stockpiled mercury. Mercury is mined primarily in Spain, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and China. The mercury could also be sold from a consolidation location, but this alternative was not evaluated in detail in the EIS because its impacts are bounded by the above alternatives.

### 'No Action' Alternative

Under the 'no action' alternative, required by law to be evaluated in all EISs, DNSC would continue to store the mercury at its depots in Hillsborough, New Jersey; New Haven, Indiana; Warren, Ohio; and at the Department of Energy's Y-12 National Security Complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

### Treatment Alternatives Are Not Evaluated in the EIS

A number of alternatives were considered but are not evaluated in detail in the Draft MM EIS because of technical immaturity, prohibitive cost, regulatory unacceptability, or because they do not support the purpose and need of the EIS.

During the scoping process for the MM EIS, DNSC considered evaluating a treatment and storage alternative that would involve processing the mercury into a more stabilized form, then storing the processed material in anticipation of future beneficial uses. This alternative was eliminated during formulation of the final alternatives for three reasons: (1) mercury can be safely stored in its elemental form, (2) elemental mercury is the preferred form for most industrial uses that require mercury, and (3) technology has not yet been developed for cost effective and environmentally sound treatment of large quantities of elemental mercury. Processing may preclude some future uses of mercury or at least make them more difficult and more expensive. Therefore, this alternative would result in additional environmental impacts and costs without significant benefits, for initial processing, storage, and conversion (reclamation), at the end of the storage period.

DNSC also considered a treatment and disposal alternative that would have involved managing the mercury at facilities permitted to handle hazardous waste. However, it has been determined that potential treatment technologies for elemental mercury are not yet available at the scale required or are not acceptable from a regulatory perspective.

