



State of Utah

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NEWS RELEASE

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## Utah Agencies Join Forces to Protect Utahns from Colorado Mine Plume

Utah State agencies are coordinating efforts to assess the immediate and long-term impacts of the mining plume flowing through communities the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accidentally released during an inspection of the abandoned Gold King mine near Silverton, Colo. on Aug. 5.

While excavating loose material, pressurized water began leaking above the mine tunnel, spilling about 3 million gallons of water stored behind the collapsed material into Cement Creek, a tributary of the Animas River. The Animas River flows into the San Juan River in New Mexico and the Four Corners area before entering Utah. The San Juan River eventually flows into Lake Powell.

Once EPA notified the state of the incident, Utah State agencies responded immediately in efforts of protecting public health and the environment. Among the actions taken, included:

- Department of Environmental Quality dispatched a water quality crew to southwest Utah to take water samples at four sites every three hours over the weekend. Initial results from samples taken on August 8 and August 9 along the San Juan River show low levels of metals dissolved in the water. The samples with high concentrations suggests that increased levels of sediment were being transported in the river due to flooding from weekend storms.
- Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management activated its emergency operations to Level 3, which is continuous monitoring.
- Department of Natural Resources's Division of Wildlife Resources took fish tissue samples to establish baseline data for subsequent testing.
- Department of Health worked with DEQ, the San Juan County Health Department, and other state and federal partners to monitor the spill and provide public health guidance.

As a result of coordinated activities, state officials began cautioning about recreating in the San Juan River until the health effects of the mine release are better understood. People are warned to stay out of any colored sediment, but if exposed are encouraged to wash it off. Also, recreationalists shouldn't drink even filtered water directly from the river but instead drink and cook with potable water that has been brought in. Drinking water in Utah has not been impacted.

Local health departments, in coordination with state agencies, will notify the public when it is safe to resume normal activities on the river.

For more information visit: <http://www.deq.utah.gov/Topics/Water/goldkingmine/index.ht>



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