

South L.A.'s Allenco fined \$99,000 over toxic emissions

Louis Sahagun, Los Angeles Times, 8-1-14

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on Wednesday fined an oil operation in a South Los Angeles neighborhood \$99,000 for failing to take steps to prevent release of toxic emissions.

Allenco Energy Inc., which owns the 2-acre site in the University Park community near USC, was given 70 days to pay the penalty.

The fine follows an EPA investigation into the facility prompted by hundreds of complaints of noxious odors and related health effects, including respiratory ailments and chronic nosebleeds in children.

Allenco continues to be committed to working with the EPA.- Peter Wittingham, an Allenco spokesman, declining to comment on when the facility would resume operations

The investigation found that Allenco violated federal environmental laws by failing to prepare and execute a spill prevention and control plan, and failing to submit chemical inventory forms for hazardous substances stored at the facility.

The EPA's four-month investigation ended in April after Allenco agreed to spend about \$700,000 on upgrades, including certification that all flame and combustible gas detectors, fire suppression systems, atmospheric tanks, pressure vessels and piping were up to code. It also agreed to fully enclose a 30-foot-long open trench in order to prevent noxious mixtures of mostly oil and water from being exposed to the atmosphere.

The company must notify the EPA that it has completed all the improvements at least 15 days before opening.

Peter Wittingham, a spokesman for the company, declined to comment on when the facility would resume operations on the site, which is owned by the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles and has been leased to Allenco since 2009. "Allenco continues to be committed to working with the EPA," he said.

Complaints of foul odors, respiratory ailments and nosebleeds all but disappeared after the facility voluntarily shut down in late November 2013. The neighborhood is home to low-income housing, day-care centers and schools.

In a separate action, the Los Angeles city attorney has filed a lawsuit accusing the company of willfully disregarding violation notices issued by oversight agencies. The complaint filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court blames Allenco's lax practices for "adverse health effects on community members in the form of severe headaches, nausea, nosebleeds, chronic fatigue and respiratory ailments including asthma."