



News Advisory For Immediate Release

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US Environmental Protection Agency
Montana Environmental Trust Group, LLC, Trustee of the Montana Environmental Custodial Trust
City of East Helena Volunteer Fire Department
Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office

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Real Life Training in East Helena

EAST HELENA, MONTANA—The last vestiges of the former Asarco Manager's House in East Helena will end with a controlled blast and burn. Beginning on April 29, the Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Bomb Squad and the City of East Helena Volunteer Fire Department will be conducting live training exercises using the outbuildings remaining on the site of the former Asarco Manager's House in East Helena. LCSO Bomb Squad personnel will conduct controlled explosive breaching of doors and windows on the buildings. Following the County's exercises, the City of East Helena Fire Department will perform "live fire" training with all buildings reduced by fire by May 11. According to Deputy Sheriff Cornish, Commander of the LCSO Bomb Squad, "This type of hands on training provides an invaluable opportunity for improving the readiness of our Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) personnel in responding to high risk situations, such as those involving hostages, armed stand-offs and other types of incidents." Fire Chief Golemon also emphasized the importance of such hands-on experience. "Real-life training allows us to provide the highest level of service to our community and ensure the safety of our firefighters. It's not often that owners will

allow emergency response personnel to practice blowing up and burning down their buildings. We are very grateful to the Montana Environmental Custodial Trust, the owner, for supporting these critical training exercises.”

The buildings—a guesthouse, two garages, a privy and a shed—are located on the site of the historic former Asarco Manager’s House, which was totally lost to fire in August of 2012. The Montana Environmental Custodial Trust, the Trustee that assumed responsibility for cleanup of the former Asarco smelter, is donating the buildings to the County and the City of East Helena for the training exercises. Originally, the Montana Custodial Trust planned to relocate the historic Manager’s House as part of Site cleanup, hoping that a non-profit or other community group would be able to restore and preserve the once elegant home. However, those plans changed late last summer when fire completely destroyed the circa 1888 structure. Sadly, the remaining outbuildings—also damaged by the fire—lost their historic significance with the loss of the house and were therefore slated for demolition and removal. According to Cindy Brooks, who heads the Montana Custodial Trust, “When County and the City asked to use the structures for live training exercises, we saw an opportunity to give something of value to the community after all.” Betsy Burns, East Helena project manager for the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Lead Agency overseeing cleanup of the former Asarco smelter, admitted that, “At first, EPA was a little nervous about allowing this type of activity on the Site; however, Deputy Sheriff Cornish, Fire Chief Golemon and their teams are seasoned professionals and EPA is confident that the training activities will be performed safely. Ultimately, the City and County’s ability to respond to emergency situations will contribute to overall community safety here in East Helena and throughout Lewis & Clark County.”

The City of East Helena Volunteer Fire Department is constantly training fire personnel in the most current, effective fire fighting techniques and looking for opportunities to test those skills in real life situations that

are not actual emergencies. According to Fire Chief Golemon, "This type of training offers our firefighters the opportunity to deal with 'live fire' situations and suppress fires under controlled conditions and close supervision. Our firefighters get to improve their understanding of how fires behave, which allows them to respond to real emergencies with the added confidence that comes from hands on experience. There is no substitute for this type of training and we truly appreciate the support of EPA, the Montana Custodial Trust and the community with these activities."

Deputy Sheriff Chris Cornish advised that, "Folks in the area may hear the sound of explosions, but there is no need for alarm. All explosive breaching activities will be performed with extensive provisions for personnel safety and control." Cornish and Golemon both emphasized that, for safety reasons, access to the area will be strictly controlled and cautioned members of the public not to congregate on nearby roads to watch the training exercises.

The Montana Custodial Trust assumed ownership, management, cleanup and redevelopment responsibility for the Asarco sites in Montana, including the former East Helena smelter, when the Asarco bankruptcy was settled in December of 2009. The Montana Trust is cleaning up the East Helena site under the oversight of EPA as Lead Agency. Other Montana Trust sites include former Asarco mines in Lincoln, Phillipsburg and Superior. The United States and the State of Montana are the beneficiaries of the Montana Trust.

For additional information about the East Helena project, please visit the Montana Trust website:

<http://www.mtenvironmentaltrust.org/east-helena>.