



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet

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### **Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection cites Hitachi Automotive of Berea for release of toxic pollutant** *Public health and drinking water supplies not at risk*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (March 11, 2011)** – The Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection (DEP) Thursday issued notices of violation (NOVs) to Hitachi Automotive Systems Americas Inc. in Berea relating to the discharge last month of wastewater contaminated with hexavalent chromium in exceedance of state and federal water quality standards.

The DEP's Environmental Response Team (ERT) responded immediately to the Feb. 4 report from Hitachi officials of the presence of a green-colored substance in the company's storm water retention basin. Sampling of the basin water revealed the presence of elevated levels of hexavalent chromium, which is used in the plant's automotive manufacturing processes. ERT ordered the plant to cease discharges of wastewater into and out of the basin. ERT also ordered the removal of the contaminated storm water by tanker trucks to approved off-site disposal facilities. (The green discoloration, caused by a harmless coolant product, was unrelated to the presence of chromium.)

Sampling on the plant site and off site in streams has been ongoing since the spill was discovered. Data has indicated the in-stream concentrations are now within acceptable levels and do not threaten public drinking water supplies.

Hexavalent chromium, also known as chromium 6, is a heavy metal that is commonly found in low levels in drinking water. It can occur naturally in the environment but can also enter drinking and surface water from industrial plants. Chromium 6 is known to be a potent carcinogen when inhaled. It was recently found to also cause cancer in laboratory animals (mice and rats) that were exposed through drinking water. Hexavalent chromium was a commonly used industrial chemical until the early 1990s and is still used in some industries, such as in chrome plating and the manufacturing of plastics and dyes.

Hitachi representatives are cooperating fully with state officials to address the release and mitigate the site, said R. Bruce Scott, DEP commissioner.

“Our ERT staff and Hitachi officials moved quickly to reduce the danger to the environment and public health by containing the wastewater and removing contaminated water,” said Scott. “The investigation into the source of the release is continuing.

The notices of violation were prepared by the Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) and the Kentucky Division of Waste Management (DWM) and specify remedial measures the company must complete by specific deadlines. The DOW NOV lists seven articles of violation and the DWM NOV lists three.

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