

# DEPARTMENT OF TOXIC SUBSTANCES CONTROL

## EMERGENCY RESPONSE UNIT

The Department of Toxic Substances Control's (DTSC) Emergency Response Unit (ERU) assists local and state agencies with emergency identification and cleanup of hazardous substances and materials.

Types of support include:

- Cleanup of abandoned hazardous substances;
- Assessment and removal of non-petroleum hazardous substances from defunct facilities that pose an *immediate threat* to public health or the environment;
- Cleanup assistance at illegal drug labs seized by law enforcement officials; and
- Hazardous substance removal support to cities and counties during declared disaster events associated with wildfires, floods and earthquakes

### Authority and Funding

DTSC is among a few state agencies that have emergency response authority and funding. This authority is granted in the State's Superfund law (California Health and Safety Code section 25300 et seq.) That same law established the Emergency Reserve Account, which funds the ERU's non-petroleum hazardous substance cleanups of abandoned waste, defunct facilities where those hazardous substances are located, and to provide support to local agencies in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. The State Superfund law has a petroleum exclusion, meaning DTSC's normal emergency response funding is not available for petroleum incidents.

California's Health and Safety Code 25354.5 established the Illegal Drug Lab Cleanup Account, which funds the assessment and cleanup of hazardous substances associated with illegal drug labs. The Emergency Reserve Account and the Illegal Drug Cleanup Account each receive an annual allocation of \$720,000. Both of these accounts are funded via the General Fund.

### Staffing

DTSC maintains a round-the-clock Duty Officer System to handle requests for assistance from local and state agencies. The Department is the only entity within the California Environmental Protection Agency that has a duty officer available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a result, DTSC has been tasked to be the point-of-contact for any incident.

The Emergency Response Unit consists of one manager, five technical staff and one administrative support staff. In the case of a major incident, 30 DTSC employees are available to respond. All are trained as Hazardous Materials Technician/Specialists through the state's Office of Emergency Services. DTSC also employs six hazardous substances cleanup contractors that are located throughout the state and are available 24/7. (See attached map)

DTSC has responded to several state and federally declared disasters in recent years. These include the Angora (Lake Tahoe) Fire in 2007, the Southern California fires in 2007, Escondido Bomb House (2010), San Bruno gas pipeline rupture (2010) and the wildfires in Monterey and Tuolumne counties (2013.) (Attached is a chart with a sampling of the larger hazardous substance removals conducted by ERU in the last five years.)