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Environment Department Issues Compliance Orders with Penalties of \$664,294 to Mesa Oil Inc. for Violations in Valencia County

(Santa Fe, NM) – The New Mexico Environment Department issued two compliance orders recently assessing civil penalties totaling \$664,294 to Mesa Oil, Inc., for several violations of state water quality and environmental laws.

The company, which has a used oil storage and processing facility in Belen, violated Ground Water Protection and Hazardous Waste Management Regulations.

“The company’s violations reveal a general disregard for state environmental regulations and pose a direct threat to groundwater in Valencia County,” said New Mexico Environment Department Secretary Ron Curry. “Mesa Oil has an obligation to residents and the state to ensure used oil is properly managed at its Belen facility. The company violated state hazardous waste management and water quality protection rules intended to protect the health of New Mexico residents and the environment.”

Inspectors for the department’s Hazardous Waste and Ground Water Quality Bureaus -- In response to an anonymous complaint -- inspected the company’s Belen facility in July and August 2010. The department determined the facility had multiple violations, including discharging petroleum hydrocarbons and water contaminants to the ground without a discharge permit; failing to notify the department of the discharge; and neglecting to store used oil properly. That violation included not using approved storage units, not covering containers, not properly labeling tanks and not providing adequate secondary containment.

The department assessed a civil penalty of \$381,250 to Mesa Oil for violations of New Mexico Used Oil Standards of the Hazardous Waste Management Regulations and a civil penalty of \$283,044 for violations of Ground Water Protection Regulations.

Mesa Oil, in addition to the civil penalties, is ordered to cease and prevent all discharges that would be in violation of the ground and surface water protection regulations and take any corrective action to contain, remove or, mitigate any releases at the Belen facility. Mesa Oil must also bring all operations at the facility into full compliance with Used Oil Standards within 60 days of the department’s order becoming final.

For more information, call Marissa Stone Bardino at (505) 827-0314.