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Industry Briefs

EPA Lifts Federal Work Ban At American Environmental Facility

ELWR has learned that the Environmental Protection Agency's Region VIII has given approval for American Environmental Network's Phoenix, Ariz. laboratory to begin performing federal contract work, following what has been a voluntary ban placed on the facility due to violations committed by the lab's previous owner. On February 5, 1996, American Environmental Network, a national environmental laboratory, bought the Analytical Technologies Inc. laboratory located in Phoenix. Prior to the sale, the EPA had suspended the Analytical Technologies laboratory because of evidence it received documenting laboratory data fraud at the facility.

Subsequent to the EPA's suspension, Analytical Technologies settled a criminal action brought by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Phoenix and agreed to pay a penalty of \$1.1 million dollars, according to EPA officials. At the time of the sale, Analytical Technologies had been working with the EPA to correct its laboratory problems and to revise its procedures but had not completed the task. As a result, when American Environmental bought the laboratory, the EPA asked the lab to agree to a "voluntary exclusion," which meant it could not bid on federal government work until the problems were corrected.

According to agency officials, American Environmental willingly agreed to EPA's request and worked cooperatively with the agency to correct its procedures. On February 2, 1997, Stephen Remaley, an EPA Region VIII technical project officer, conducted an on-site visit of the laboratory to evaluate the internal quality assurance program and oversight procedures the new company had implemented. Based on Remaley's visit, it was determined that American Environmental had successfully implemented a program of oversight and training and that adequate steps had been taken to prevent any recurrence of the problems that occurred at Analytical Technologies. □