

Gila Resources  
Information  
Project

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### MISSION STATEMENT

*Recognizing that human and environmental systems are inseparable and interdependent, Gila Resources Information Project pursues two goals: To protect and nurture human communities by safeguarding the natural resources that sustain us all; and to safeguard natural resources by facilitating informed public participation in resource use decisions.*

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To become a member and receive a copy of Get A GRIP, a minimum donation of \$5.00 is appreciated. GRIP is a 501(c)(3), tax-exempt organization; your contribution is tax-deductible.

Your privacy is important to us. GRIP will never share your name or personal information without your consent.

## GRIP Meets with PD about February Sulfuric Acid Spill

By Allyson Siwik, GRIP Executive Director

Following a Silver City *Daily Press* report on a leaking Bulk Transportation truck that spilled sulfuric acid through Silver City and parts of Grant County while en route to the Chino mine, GRIP met with a Phelps Dodge environmental official to find out more details on the cause of the accident. Although an investigation of the incident is not complete, PD was able to confirm the *Daily Press* account.

Approximately 12 - 15 trucks pass through Silver City every day delivering sulfuric acid to Chino for use in their copper leaching process. A strong corrosive, sulfuric acid exposure can result in severe irritation or burns to the eye, skin or respiratory tract at lower concentrations and can be immediately dangerous to life and health at higher concentrations (Texas Department of State Health Services).

In the early morning hours of February 26, a transport truck leaked small amounts of sulfuric acid beginning on NM90 at the Hudson St. Bridge through 12th Street, at the intersection of NM152 and US180, and at the intersection of NM152 and 356 in Hanover. Less than 50 gallons of acid was estimated to have been released. The Silver City Fire Department responded to the incident and neutralized the acid with soda ash. Because of the small amount of acid spilled, an evacuation was considered unnecessary. Viva Environmental of El Paso arrived that afternoon to clean up the soda ash and dispose of the neutralized material. Bulk Transportation took responsibility for the spill.

GRIP had questions about the safety record of Bulk Transportation given the number of vehicles that pass through Silver City and the Mining District every day carrying this hazardous material. We consulted with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) database for company safety records. The FMCSA regulates commercial motor carriers and requires that companies comply with a variety of safety-related rules, including periodic inspections of the vehicle and its load and drug and alcohol testing of drivers.

GRIP reviewed the FMCSA safety information ([www.safersys.org](http://www.safersys.org)) for Bulk Transportation of Walnut, CA and found that the company has an overall "satisfactory" carrier safety rating. Inspections over the past 2 years resulted in fewer vehicles being taken out of service than the national average (see table). In the past 24 months, 14 crashes have been reported by the company with 1 fatality. The company has 148 vehicles and 160 drivers.

### Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration SafeStat results for Bulk Transportation, Walnut, CA for 24 Months Prior to 4/12/06

<u>Inspection Type</u>	<u>Vehicle</u>	<u>Driver</u>	<u>Hazmat</u>
Inspections	430	527	314
Out of Service	57	7	4
Out of Service%	13.3%	1.3%	1.3%
Nat'l Average %(2003)	22.92%	6.78%	5.26%

GRIP has requested that PD share the results of the spill investigation with us and the public so that the community understands what happened and how Bulk Transportation has dealt with the problem and plans to prevent future accidents. Although these are not Phelps Dodge vehicles, PD staff has assured us that safety is a high priority for the company.