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For Immediate Release - February 02, 2017

Astro Chemicals, Inc. Penalized \$5,000 by MassDEP for Failing to Report Hazardous Materials Incident at Springfield Plant

BOSTON – The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) has assessed a \$5,000 penalty against Astro Chemicals, Inc., a chemical supply company based in Springfield, for violating hazardous materials spill notification regulations related to a spill at its facility at 64 Shaw's Lane.

Early in the morning of July 19, 2016, Astro personnel discovered that several drums of divinylbenzene, a combustible and reactive chemical, had reacted, expanded and/or breached the drums, likely due to elevated temperature in the warehouse. Astro cleaned up a small amount of divinylbenzene that spilled onto the warehouse floor, and ventilated the building. Astro also took steps as directed by the manufacturer of the divinylbenzene, Dow Chemical, to stabilize the drums, but did not contact Springfield public safety officials or MassDEP regarding the incident.

On July 21, MassDEP received an anonymous complaint through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the incident, and responded to the site to investigate. Based upon its review, MassDEP determined that notification of the threat of release of divinylbenzene should have been provided to MassDEP within two hours of Astro becoming aware of the incident. Subsequent to MassDEP's inspection, Astro submitted all documentation required by MassDEP regarding the threat of release. Astro also indicated it will no longer store this material at its warehouse.

In a consent order, Astro agreed to pay the \$5,000 penalty, and to retrain its employees on notification requirements and appropriate response to spills of oil and hazardous materials, with emphasis on immediate notification of local public safety officials and MassDEP.

"A reactive chemical such as this has the potential to cause significant damage, which is why it is very important that MassDEP and public safety officials be notified when there is a release or a threat of a release," said Michael Gorski, director of MassDEP's Western Regional Office in Springfield. "Responders can provide technical advice, monitoring and cleanup capabilities."

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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