



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 13, 2006

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**Statement regarding Congressman Silvestre Reyes' request for a Congressional Investigation and Hearings on Allegations of Illegal treatment and Disposal of Hazardous Waste**

Thomas G. Aldrich, Vice President Environmental Affairs

“The allegations that ASARCO LLC illegally treated and disposed of hazardous waste at its El Paso copper smelter are unfounded. The issues underlying these allegations were addressed and resolved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a consent decree entered over 7 years ago. However, if Congress elects to act upon Mr. Reyes' request, Asarco will cooperate fully. We hope any investigation will be expeditious and will put an end to the speculation, innuendo, propaganda, and scare tactics by those who oppose renewal of the smelter's air permit.

We are confident that any investigation will show that smelting the copper feedstock in question did not violate the El Paso plant's air quality permit and that future operations at the plant, if the permit renewal is approved, would be protective of human health and the environment.

The El Paso copper smelter did not take any material from the Rocky Mountain Arsenal but purchased copper products directly from Encycle, a fully permitted hazardous waste recycler. Encycle produced a copper-bearing product suitable for smelting. This copper product was not classified as hazardous waste at the time of its receipt by the El Paso plant because, as determined by the State of Texas, it was comparable to the smelter's normal copper feedstock.

Asarco El Paso stopped accepting this material when EPA questioned the State of Texas determination. Asarco entered into a consent decree with EPA and the State of Texas in 1999 that resolved the matter. “

ASARCO LLC is a Tucson-based integrated copper mining, smelting and refining company. For more information, visit [www.asarco.com/elpaso](http://www.asarco.com/elpaso)

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