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CONTACT: Kristin Ryan, (907) 269-7604, kristin.ryan@alaska.gov

State of Alaska to Conduct Removal of Hazardous Material from Former Fairbanks Junkyard

FAIRBANKS, AK — In an effort to create a safer Alaska and protect public health, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has initiated a cleanup of hazardous materials at the Former Miller's Junkyard operation on 30th Avenue in Fairbanks. This location is separate from the currently operating Miller Salvage Inc., located on an adjacent parcel.

The former junkyard, which operated from at least the 1970s through the early 2000s, contains drums of waste products that include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), chlorinated solvents, various petroleum products, and other unknown compounds. The contents of several drums have already released to soils on the site. Other items located at the former junk yard include car parts, crushed drums, damaged vehicle batteries, compressed gas cylinders, and other materials containing lead, mercury, and asbestos. The chemical and physical hazards at the site have raised immediate concerns over the potential impacts to human health and the environment.

"Our top priority is protecting public health and the environment. This cleanup project works to protect the health and wellness of the Fairbanks community as we all work towards creating a safer Alaska," said Kristin Ryan, director of DEC's Division of Spill Prevention and Response. The 11-acre site has been fenced off to control entry and prevent people and wildlife from coming into contact with hazardous materials and physical hazards. DEC has been coordinating with the City of Fairbanks and the Fairbanks North Star Borough on the initial assessment and ongoing cleanup activities at the site.

"The first step in the cleanup process is to remove the drums and other hazardous materials and then conduct a thorough site characterization to determine the nature and extent of contamination on the site and whether it has migrated off site," said Ryan. "The results will determine our next course of action."

DEC received numerous complaints about this location from the public this spring. Department staff then visited the site with the help of the Fairbanks North Star Borough Hazardous Materials Team to survey the location and determine whether or not immediate action was needed. Due to the discovery of multiple ongoing releases of hazardous materials, as well as other hazards constituting an imminent and substantial threat, DEC has accessed \$2.5 million from the State's Response Fund for site cleanup and characterization. The State's Oil and Hazardous Substance Release Prevention and Response Fund is available to DEC under Alaska Statute 46.08.040(a) to respond to pollution that poses an imminent and substantial threat to public health or welfare, or to the environment.

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