

# NPL Site Narrative for Cimarron Mining Corp.

## CIMARRON MINING CORP. Carrizozo, New Mexico

**Conditions at proposal (June 24, 1988):** The Cimarron Mining Corp. Site covers 5 to 10 acres approximately 500 yards north of U.S. Highway 380 and approximately 0.4 mile east of U.S. 54 in Carrizozo, Lincoln County, New Mexico. A recreational area and historical marker are on the highway approximately 300 yards south of the site.

During 1979-82, Cimarron Mining Corp., also known as Southwest Minerals Corp., operated a mill that recovered metal from ore transported to the site. The process used a 50/50 solution of cyanide salt and metal stripper. Previously, the mill was operated by Sierra Blanca Mining and Milling Co. for the extraction of gold with cyanide. Both processes generated a liquid waste containing cyanide and heavy metals.

In June 1982, New Mexico charged Cimarron with failing to comply with the State water quality and hazardous waste regulations. The company took no action in response. It went out of business and declared bankruptcy in U.S. Federal Court on August 14, 1984.

A site inspection conducted by the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division in October 1984 revealed two cyanide solution tanks, a discharge pit, a tailings impoundment, an uncovered tailings pile, and a drum storage area. The tanks are concrete-lined, but the other facilities are unlined and lack leachate or seepage collection systems. In August 1987, EPA erected a fence around the tailings impoundment and tailings pile.

In mid-1987, EPA detected cyanide and heavy metals in ground water, soil, sediment, and tailings on the site. Cyanide was detected at a concentration of 1970 parts per billion in an on-site shallow monitoring well. A tailings pile sample contained 15.0 milligrams/kilogram of cyanide. The levels are potentially toxic to human health.

An estimated 1,500 people obtain drinking water from municipal wells within 3 miles of the site. Wells are also used to irrigate food crops.

This mining site is being proposed for the NPL because it is a noncoal site with mining operations that occurred after August 3, 1977, the enactment date of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA). Thus, the site is neither regulated by SMCRA nor eligible for funds from the SMCRA Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program.

**Status (November 1988):** EPA has evaluated the site and determined that emergency action is not warranted at this time.

**Status (October 4, 1989):** EPA is conducting a remedial investigation/feasibility study to determine the type and extent of contamination at the site and identify alternatives for remedial action.

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. ATSDR ToxFAQs can be found on the Internet at [ATSDR - ToxFAQs](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp) (<http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>) or by telephone at 1-888-42-ATSDR or 1-888-422-8737.