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Palmerton Zinc Site

Palmerton, PA — Fact Sheet

U.S. EPA Region III — August 1995

35 Homes Cleaned Through Interim Action

EPA has completed cleaning a total of 39 homes in Palmerton under the Agency's Interim Action cleanup. EPA cleaned 24 homes last year and has finished cleaning 14 homes so far this year. EPA has scheduled an additional 9 homes for cleanup and continues to contact five more homes that qualified for the cleanup after the 1995 sampling round.

The most recent sampling round took place in June 1995. EPA sampled the soil, interior dust, and paint, and collected survey forms from 30 residences. Of those 30 residences, approximately 18 met one criteria for participation in the clean-up program: small children are either living or spending a lot of time at the residence. Another criteria is the level of lead and cadmium found at the residence. Homes with small children and high levels of lead or cadmium are automatically eligible for cleanup. EPA decides whether to clean homes with small children and moderate levels of lead or cadmium on a case-by-case basis. As the June 1995 sampling results come in, EPA will be scheduling more home cleanups.

If you would like your home to be sampled, please contact:

Michael Towle

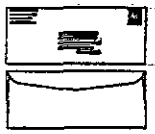
610-826-5074

Step-by-Step Guide to the Interim Removal Action Process

Step One: EPA develops a list of locations to be sampled from previous sampling results and residents' requests. EPA then samples soil, interior dust, and paint at these residences, depending upon the owner's wishes. If you would like EPA to sample your home, please call (610) 826-5074.

Step Two: Resident responds to a survey questionnaire indicating the presence of small children in the household and interest in the Interim Removal Action.

Step Three: EPA evaluates the results of the survey samples and determines if the property is eligible for the clean-up program. Although EPA considers many factors in determining eligibility, the presence of young children and high levels of lead and/or cadmium at the residence are key factors.



Step Four: EPA mails the analytical results to the residents. EPA then contacts the owners of the eligible properties and offers to perform the cleanup. The property owner must agree to the cleanup before EPA schedules the cleanup.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE (continued)

Step Five: EPA schedules the cleanup of interested and eligible properties. EPA reviews the cleanup process with the homeowner and, if necessary, discusses how to accommodate the owner's requests.

Step Six: If the property owner wants the interior of the house cleaned, EPA provides the property owner with packing materials and information on how to prepare the home for cleanup. Possessions should be placed in boxes but do not need to be removed from the house.

Step Seven: If carpeting will need to be replaced because of contamination, EPA hires an appraiser to prepare an estimate of the replacement cost. EPA and the homeowner sign and notarize a replacement agreement which requires EPA to pay the owner for the replacement. EPA will deal with any property damage which may occur on a case-by case basis.

Step Eight: EPA then conducts a survey of asbestos-containing material to ensure that EPA does not unknowingly disturb this material during the cleanup. However, EPA will not address asbestos-containing material.

Step Nine: If interior cleaning is performed, EPA requests that families temporarily relocate from the premises during the interior cleanup to prevent any unnecessary exposure and to facilitate a prompt cleanup. EPA reimburses families for meals and lodging while out of the house.

Step Ten: EPA cleans the interior and/or exterior of eligible properties. The family may return when the interior cleaning is done.

UPDATE ON BUTTE/SILVER BOW SITE

Background

At last July's Scientific Symposium, sponsored by the Palmerton Environmental Task Force (PETF), members of the PETF recommended that the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency Region III (EPA Region III) examine the plan developed for the Silver Bow Creek/Butte Area Site (Butte Site) in Montana as an example of what could be done for Palmerton.

EPA Region III continues to follow up with its counterparts in Montana to find out more about progress at the Butte site, in many ways a sister site to Palmerton Zinc. Both the Butte Site and the Palmerton Zinc Site are the result of former smelting operations and contain lead as a primary contaminant. Both sites also are affected by contamination as a result of current activities: mining in Butte and metals recycling in Palmerton. Finally, in response to the lead contamination threat, both sites have developed Lead Intervention/ Abatement Programs to address possible sources of lead contamination not related to site activities (e.g., lead in paint).

Response Action

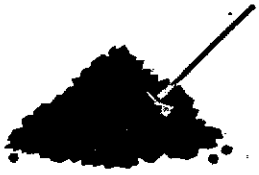
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region VIII (EPA Region VIII) and the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (MDHES) designed a Response Action in conjunction with the Butte-Silver Bow (BSB) County government and the potentially responsible parties (PRPs), led by Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), with BSB acting as the lead agency. The resulting Response Action addresses all sources of lead contamination in the Butte area, not just those caused by site activities.

According to the March 1994 Proposed Plan for the Response Action, BSB (as the lead agency) and the potentially responsible par-

ties (PRPs) agreed to:

- Identify children with elevated blood-lead levels;
- Conduct an environmental assessment in homes of children with elevated blood-lead levels to prioritize homes for cleanup;
- Clean interior and exterior lead paint by replacement, encapsulation, paint removal, and/or house siding as necessary;
- Remove indoor dust contaminated with lead by cleaning heating ducts, interior surfaces, and attics and replacing insulation, cloth furniture, and carpeting;
- Clean yards, parks, and play areas with high soil lead levels by removing contaminated soils and capping with cover soil and sod, concrete, or asphalt;
- Continue blood-lead testing of young children, lead education and awareness activities, and tracking the residence changes of young children and mothers through the Geographical Information System (GIS).

The PRPs also agreed to clean up source areas with high soil lead levels by removing contaminated soils, capping, and replanting. Identification of children with elevated blood lead levels, follow-up testing, and associated environmental assessments of residences began last year and are continuing. The Butte/Silver Bow County Health Department also provides free lead screening for children.



Current Efforts

In March 1995, in response to direction by letter to perform additional work under a Unilateral Administrative Order (Order) issued by EPA Region VIII, ARCO submitted a Work Plan for Residential Areas as part of the Butte Priority Soils Expedited Response Action. As part of this effort, EPA and BSB will identify the specific parks, play areas, and yards of up to 100 residences which are presently occupied by children aged 0 to 6 years, pregnant women, and/or nursing mothers, where soil lead exceeds 1,200 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) for the soil removal action. EPA/BSB surveys are already underway. Planned soil work includes:

- Photographic/video records of parks, yards, and play areas, made with input from owners/occupants who are then provided copies;
- Owners/occupants are given written notification of the start date and duration of work with a list of contacts and phone numbers representing ARCO, BSB, EPA (Region VIII) and the contractor(s) who will actually conduct the work; and
- Soil excavation and disposal to a depth of 18 inches or to bedrock (if encountered first), covering of soil exposed by excavation with two inches of crushed limestone, backfilling with clean soil (confirmed by X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis), and placement of weed-free sod in yards and parks and seeding over clean soil in play areas.

BSB, funded by ARCO, is set to begin the cleanup of parks, residences, and yards described in the Proposed Plan. Interior cleaning and interior/exterior lead paint removal as required is slated to proceed simultaneously with soil removal. ARCO's work plan has been approved and only the final arrangements for a contaminated soil repository need to be completed for cleanup to begin, most likely by July, 1995.

EPA Region III remains favorably impressed with the cooperation of the PRPs with Federal, state, and local government in Butte. EPA is especially encouraged by the coordinated outreach between all the parties toward solving the health and environmental contamination problems in the affected community, with leadership concentrated at the local level.

ORIGINAL

EPA CONTACTS

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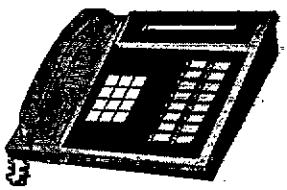

INFORMATION REPOSITORY

The following location contains all available information on the Palmerton Zinc Site including the Administrative Record File, the Community Relations Plan, any recent fact sheets and relevant reports such as the NEIC Source Identification Study Report.

Palmerton Library
4th Street and Delaware Avenue
Palmerton, PA 18071
Gerald Geiger, Director
(610) 826-3424

OPEN
Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. - 4:55 p.m.
Monday through Wednesday,
7:00 p.m. - 8:55 p.m.
Saturday, 10:00 a.m. - 11:55 a.m.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Region III
841 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19107

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