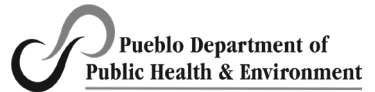


# Potential Health Risks at Former Smelter Area

## Colorado Smelter Superfund Site, Operable Unit 2

### Pueblo, Colorado / EPA Region 8

May 2023



## Site Status

The Colorado Smelter Superfund Site is located in Pueblo, Colorado. The site is divided into two areas: residential and commercial properties (Operable Unit 1, or OU1) and the former smelter area and undeveloped areas (Operable Unit 2, or OU2). The purpose of this fact sheet is to inform organizations working with

homeless persons who may be living in the OU2 area and to assist in risk communication.



- OU2 is a portion of the site where a historic lead and silver smelter operated from 1883 to 1908.
- In 2019, EPA conducted initial sampling (soil, surface water, pore water, and sediment sampling) to understand the extent of smelter-related contamination. However, further investigation is needed.
- Several homeless camps are located within OU2.

**EPA is concerned about the health of those living in this area due to preliminary data showing lead and arsenic contamination.**

Map of OU2 Former Smelter Area Boundary

## Contamination and Potential Health Risks in OU2



Massive Slag Pile in OU2

The EPA is conducting a thorough study of the area to better understand the extent of contamination and how to reduce risk in this area.

- The former smelter left behind a massive slag pile (see picture) which has high levels of lead and arsenic.
- The soil and surface water running through this area have also shown high levels of lead and arsenic contamination.
- Sampling of soil, sediment, surface water, groundwater, and slag has begun to collect data about the site.
- Initial data has shown that the area is not suitable as a living area due to major health concerns.

**The best way to avoid health effects from lead and arsenic is to avoid contact with contaminated soil and water.**

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## Site Happenings

EPA has been conducting sampling at OU2 to determine what kind of contamination is present, where it is, and how it moves by collecting and analyzing samples of soil, groundwater, surface water, pore water, biota, and sediments since 2018.

### Previous Sampling

2018 - Sediment, surface water, and pore water

2019 - Surficial soil

2023 - Slag

### Ongoing sampling in 2023

Surficial soil, surface water/pore water, ground water, and biota

## Health Effects of Lead and Arsenic

Lead and arsenic may pose a threat to human health.

### *Lead*

Health effects may include: reduced cognitive function including memory, attention and learning, mood disorders, high blood pressure, abdominal pain, reduced fetus growth and other complications in pregnant women, reduced sperm count and abnormal sperm in men, and neurological damage or lower IQ scores in children.

### *Arsenic*

Health effects may include: changes in skin color and texture, skin cancer, lung cancer, bladder cancer, liver cancer, pain or tingling in hands or feet, stomach ache, nausea, diarrhea, abnormal heart rate, and lower IQ scores in children.

## Community Resources

- **Free Blood Lead Testing**
  - Please contact the Pueblo Department of Public Health and Environment (PDPHE) at 719-583-4307 for information.
- **Free breakfast, lunch and clean water: Mondays – Saturdays**
  - Please call The Pueblo Community Soup Kitchen at 719-545-6540 for more information.
- **Free dinner and clean water: Everyday at 4:30pm**
  - Please call The Pueblo Rescue Mission at 719-924-8413 for more information.
- **Housing and wellness services**
  - Posada – 719-545-8776
  - Center for Self-Reliance – 719-546-1271
  - Pueblo Community Health Center – 719-543-8717
  - Health Solutions Crisis Living Room – 719-542-2746
  - Southern Colorado Harm Reduction – 719-289-7149
- **Information about EPA's work**
  - Please call Amanda Bartley at 406-465-8830 or Sabrina Forrest at 303-589-1286.
  - Visit the EPA's website at: [www.epa.gov/superfund/colorado-smelter](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/colorado-smelter)