



# U.S. EPA to Clean Up Lead in DePue, Hold Public Meeting

**DePue/New Jersey Zinc/Mobil Chemical Corp. Site**

DePue, Illinois

November 2019

## You're invited

U.S. EPA invites you to a **public meeting** where officials will give an update on site status and answer any questions.

**Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2019**

7 p.m.

St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Church Hall, 312 Park St.

U.S. EPA is also holding an **open house** where you will be able to talk one-on-one with representatives from U.S. EPA, Illinois EPA, and the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

**Thursday, Dec. 5, 2019**

Two sessions: 1-3 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.

DePue VFW Hall  
202 W. 1st St.

## Contact information

For more information about the cleanup, contact these U.S. EPA team members:

*For general questions:*

**Charles Rodriguez**

(Atención en español)

Community Involvement Coordinator  
312-886-7472

rodriguez.charles@epa.gov

*For residential soil questions:*

**Sarah Rolfes**

Remedial Project Manager

312-886-6551

rolfes.sarah@epa.gov

*For non-residential cleanup inquiries:*

**Krista McKim**

Remedial Project Manager

312-353-8270

mckim.krista@epa.gov

*For health-related questions:*

**Motria Caudill**

Environmental Health Scientist

312-886-0267

mcaudill@cdc.gov

Call U.S. EPA toll-free at 800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays, or visit

[www.epa.gov/superfund/depue-newjersey-zinc](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/depue-newjersey-zinc).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) assumed the role as lead agency of the DePue/New Jersey Zinc/Mobil Chemical Corp. Superfund site as of Oct. 16, 2019, because cleanup negotiations between Illinois EPA and the potentially responsible parties have reached an impasse. Under federal Superfund law, U.S. EPA has additional authorities to help leverage completion of the cleanup.

U.S. EPA will seek to negotiate a cleanup agreement with the potentially responsible parties, CBS and ExxonMobil. U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA have a shared goal to begin the cleanup of residential properties in spring 2020. U.S. EPA will continue to work closely with Illinois EPA throughout the various investigative and cleanup activities.

## Background

The DePue/New Jersey Zinc/Mobil Chemical Superfund site is a 950-acre area that at one time contained a zinc smelter and a phosphate fertilizer plant. The site is contaminated with elevated levels of metals that include zinc, lead, arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, and manganese.

## Current status

Due to the site's size and complexity, the area is divided into five operable units (OUs) for investigation and cleanup (*see map on next page*). This is the current status for each one:

- **Operable Unit 1 (South Ditch):** The South Ditch conveyed surface water and groundwater from the plant area to Lake DePue for discharge. A 2005 interim cleanup action removed heavily contaminated sediment from the ditch. A more permanent remedy for the South Ditch will be incorporated into a cleanup proposal for OU5, Lake DePue.
- **Operable Unit 2 (Phosphogypsum Stack):** On the north side of Highway 29 is a 125-acre phosphogypsum pile – a byproduct of fertilizer production. The disposal area has been closed consistent with Illinois' landfill regulations. The phosphogypsum pile has been covered with 2 feet of soil and will be planted with native vegetation. The cover has been completed with some areas having received only temporary vegetation. Permanent vegetation will be installed next year. Water and seepage from the stack are collected from a sump routed to the Clearwater Pond and wetlands area for treatment and discharge to the Illinois River. A long-term groundwater and surface water monitoring program is ongoing.
- **Operable Unit 3 (Former Plant Site Area):** The area includes a 50-foot-high partially-vegetated zinc slag pile that covers 14 acres. Adjacent areas where slag has been placed in surface depressions include another 10 acres. Ridges of lithopone left over from paint pigment production cover about 10 acres. An interim water treatment plant, operating since the mid-1990s, collects groundwater from the site, treats it to remove metals, and discharges treated water to the Illinois River. An ecological risk (wildlife) assessment is ongoing as part of the remedial investigation.

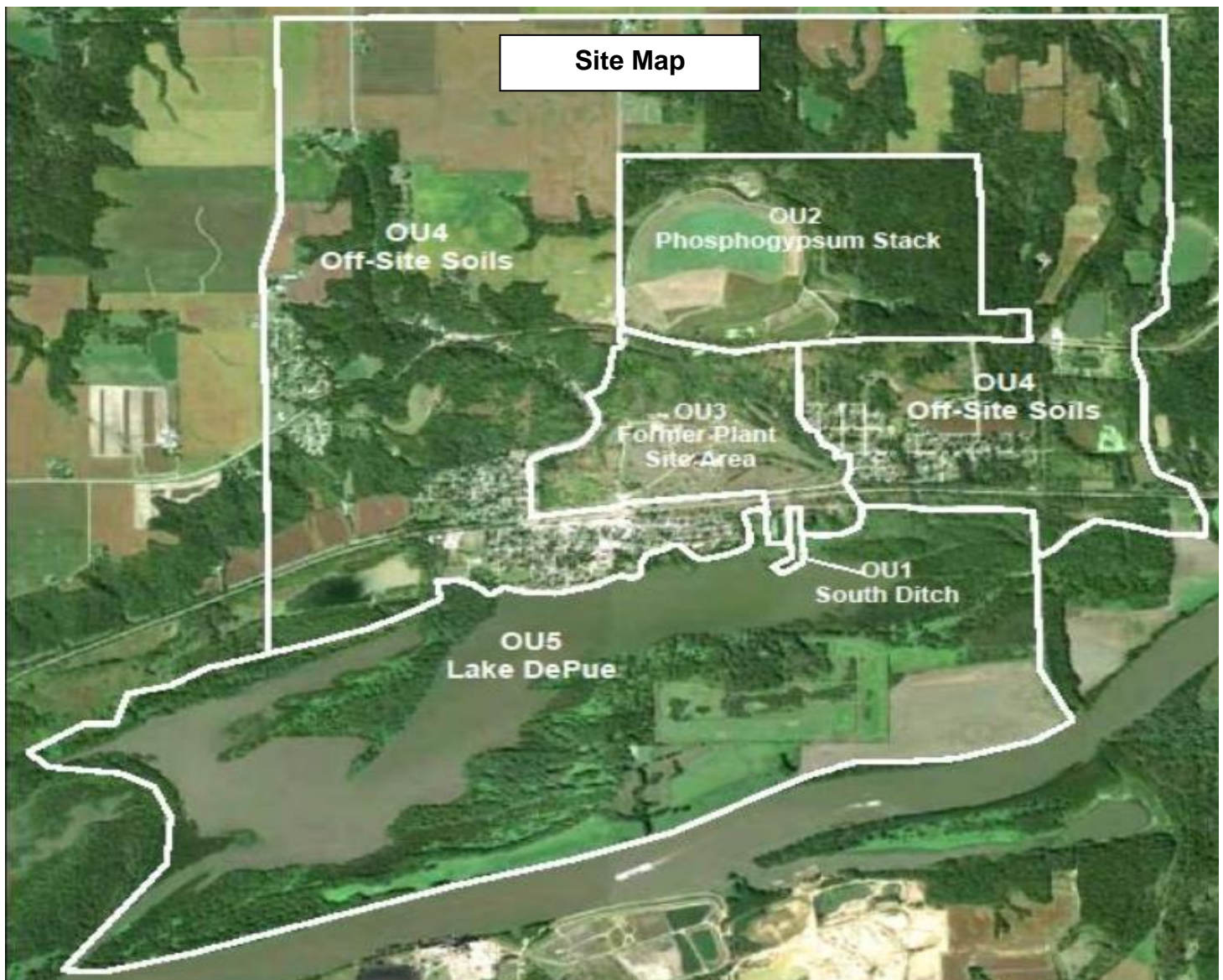


Figure 1: Map of DePue/New Jersey Zinc/Mobil Chemical Corp. Superfund Site

- **Operable Unit 4 (Off-site Soil):** Includes soil impacted by plant operations within the village of DePue, including residential yards, public parks, the school, and other public areas, alleys, etc. Contractors hired by the potentially responsible parties have been collecting soil samples. Illinois EPA began sending sampling results to property owners earlier this year. U.S. EPA will soon begin sending sampling results as the new lead agency for the site. U.S. EPA and Illinois EPA want to begin residential cleanups next spring.
- **Operable Unit 5 (Lake DePue Sediment and Floodplain):** The lake and its floodplain contain soil and sediment that is contaminated from historical plant discharges. An investigation into the extent of contamination has been completed and was presented to the public in 2009. Since then, a human health risk assessment has been completed, along with an ongoing assessment on the risks to wildlife.

### Residential soil sampling

The first step in the residential soil sampling process is to get written permission from the property owner – via a consent form called an “access agreement” – so the contractors can collect soil samples. The samples are taken by digging several narrow holes up to 24 or 30 inches deep at several spots in the property.

The soil samples are taken from these holes at 6-inch intervals of depth and sent to a lab. Levels of lead, arsenic, cadmium and manganese in the samples are measured in units called parts per million. Once it receives the test results from the lab, U.S. EPA will send a letter explaining what the results were, and what the next steps are. Test results are being sent directly to property owners and tenants.



## Residential soil sampling (continued)

For the village of DePue, test results for lead above 400 parts lead per million parts soil (parts per million, abbreviated ppm) are above U.S. EPA's cleanup threshold. EPA's cleanup standard for arsenic contamination is 21 ppm. The federal Agency's cleanup standard for manganese contamination is 1,800 ppm, and the cleanup standard for cadmium is 24 ppm for a garden and 70 ppm for a yard. Properties exceeding those levels will be placed on the cleanup list.

## Residential soil cleanup process

U.S. EPA, Illinois EPA and the cleanup contractors strive to work closely with property owners to ensure they know what to expect during the cleanup and ultimately to confirm they are satisfied with the way the property has been restored. The soil cleanup process generally goes as follows:

- Meeting with property owner to go over the specifics of the cleanup.
- Excavation of contaminated soil according to designs.
- Backfill with clean soil.
- Restoration of lawn areas, vegetation and landscaping items.
- Maintenance period of 30-60 days for restored grass and plants.
- Closeout meeting with owner to ensure the restoration work was completed as agreed in the pre-cleanup meeting.
- Property owner receives a letter of cleanup completion.

## Human health risks

Previous soil sampling revealed that lead, arsenic, cadmium, and manganese were above health-protective screening levels throughout the village. Cobalt was also found in soil at concentrations above screening levels, but was limited to two samples and was mingled with other contaminants.

People are potentially exposed to metals by accidentally swallowing small amounts of contaminated soil in their yards and eating produce grown in contaminated soil. To a lesser degree, people also could be exposed by breathing in contaminated dust particles or getting contaminated soil on their skin.

There are some steps residents can take to minimize potential exposures to contaminants. These include:

- Have children play on grassy areas in the yard, not on bare dirt.
- Wash hands regularly, especially after playing outside and before eating.
- Thoroughly wash home-grown fruits and vegetables before eating.
- Wipe shoes on an outdoor mat and leave them by the door instead of wearing them inside.



Figure 2: Residential soil sampling is minimally invasive.



Figure 3: Typical excavation of contaminated soil.

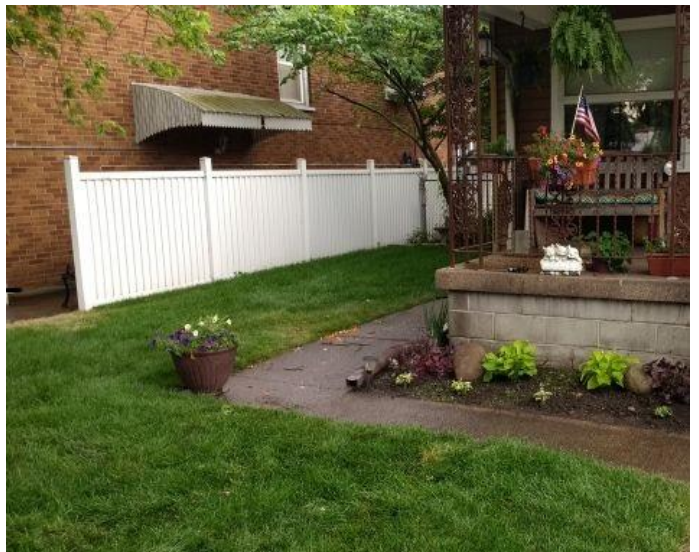


Figure 4: Crews restore properties to their previous condition.

**You're invited to attend:**

**Public Meeting**


**December 4, 2019, 7 p.m.**

**St. Mary's Catholic Church  
Church Hall, 312 Park St.**

**Open House**

**December 5, 2019, 1-3 p.m. and 4-7 p.m.**

**DePue VFW Hall  
202 W. 1st St.**

*Reproduced on Recycled Paper* 

**DEPUE / NEW JERSEY ZINC/ MOBIL CHEMICAL CORP.  
SUPERFUND SITE: U.S. EPA to Lead Cleanup in DePue, Hold Public Meeting**

United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency  
Region 5  
Community Involvement and  
Outreach Section (RC-19J)  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

