

NPL Partial Site Deletion Narrative

Omaha Lead

Omaha, Nebraska

On July 21, 2020, the EPA partially deleted 117 residential parcels of the Omaha Lead site located in Douglas County, Nebraska from the National Priorities List (NPL). This partial deletion pertains to only the 117 residential parcels. It includes surface soils present at residential properties, child-care centers and other residential-type properties. The remaining parcels will remain on the NPL.

The Omaha Lead site extends from the Douglas-Sarpy County line on the south, north to Read Street, west of the Missouri River and east of 56th Street. The site is centered in downtown Omaha, where two former lead-processing facilities operated; the American Smelting and Refining Company, Inc. (ASARCO), and Aaron Ferer & Sons Company (later Gould Electronics, Inc. (Gould)). ASARCO operated a lead refinery for over 120 years and Gould operated a lead battery recycling plant. Both the ASARCO and Gould facilities released lead-containing particulates into the atmosphere from their smokestacks, which were deposited on surrounding residential properties. The site was listed on the NPL on April 30, 2003.

In 1998, the Omaha City Council solicited assistance from the EPA to address the high incidence of elevated blood lead levels in children identified by the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD). In 1999, the EPA began investigating lead contamination in the Omaha area. The initial removal consisted of excavation and replacement of contaminated soil where lead concentration exceeded the action level of 400 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg), from properties that provided licensed child daycare services and residential properties with a child seven years of age or younger with elevated blood level for lead. A second removal action was initiated in 2002 by the EPA, which included all other residential type properties where the maximum non-foundation soil lead concentration exceeded an action level of 2,500 mg/kg. Over time, this action level was lowered to 1,200 mg/kg and then 800 mg/kg. An Interim Record of Decision (ROD) was signed in 2004 to address: (1) Stabilization of deteriorating exterior lead-based paint at properties; (2) Response to interior dust at properties where levels exceeded applicable criteria; (3) Public health education; and (4) Participation in a comprehensive remedy with other agencies and organizations.

The final ROD for the site was signed in May 2009, selecting a remedy including excavation and replacement of soil exceeding 400 mg/kg lead, stabilization of deteriorating exterior lead-based paint, response to lead-contaminated interior dust, health education, and operation of a Local Lead Hazard Registry as an institutional control. The excavation of soils was accomplished using lightweight excavation equipment and hand tools. Excavation continued until the residual lead concentration was less than 400 mg/kg in the upper foot, or less than 1,200 mg/kg at depths greater than one foot. Excavated areas were backfilled with clean soil and sod was placed over the remediated areas. Contaminated soil was transported to a waste disposal landfill for use as daily cover and/or disposal. Removal of loose and flaking lead-based paint was performed by wet scraping, and collection of paint chips using plastic sheeting. Scraped areas were primed and two coats of paint were applied to all previously painted surfaces. A health education program was implemented to increase public awareness and mitigate exposure. The EPA worked extensively with the Omaha community through a variety of communication vehicles including, local speaking engagements, participation in citizens' groups and city council meetings, local public access television, coverage on radio, television, in local and national newspapers, mass mailings of informational materials, public outreach by telephone, conducting public meetings, and through the EPA website.

The EPA and the state of Nebraska, thorough the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality have determined that all appropriate response actions under CERCLA, other than maintenance of institutional controls and five-year reviews, have been completed for the 117 residential parcels at the Omaha Lead site. Therefore, the EPA is deleting the 117 residential parcels of the Omaha Lead site from the NPL. The remaining parcels will remain on the NPL and will not be considered for deletion as part of this action.