

## NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

\*\*\*NPL Site\*\*\*

July 2025

### HISTORIC POTTERIES | Trenton, New Jersey Mercer County

#### **Site Location:**

The Historic Potteries site consists primarily of residential areas, a public school, and public park properties initially identified in or around the East Trenton and Top Road neighborhood in the city of Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey, although commercial and industrial properties may also be contaminated.

#### **Site History:**

The pottery industry was prominent in Trenton, with a major hub in the East Trenton and Top Road neighborhoods. The industry grew from the 1850s until the 1920s, when more than 50 potteries operated simultaneously; products included tableware, art ceramics, sanitary ware, and electrical porcelain. Residential development of the area coincided with the industrial activity. The pottery industry began to shrink considerably during the Great Depression; as it waned, some of the historic pottery locations were converted to additional residential property. Lead was commonly used in glazes that were subjected to very high temperatures in the firing kilns, causing lead to be released into the air via the kiln exhaust and then settle onto soil downwind from the kilns. Soil containing ceramic pieces was likely used as fill material during residential development and may also be a source of lead contamination. In 2018, the state of New Jersey notified the EPA that the neighborhood of East Trenton was contaminated with lead, but the EPA had to conduct investigations following this notification to confirm that lead was present in the soil of residential properties.

#### **Site Contamination/Contaminants:**

Soil is contaminated with lead at levels that exceed the Removal Management Level (RML).

#### **Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:**

The soil contamination potentially affects 542 intermediate school students and their faculty and administrators, as well as at least 226 residents in the East Trenton and Top Road neighborhoods. The potteries industry was present in Trenton outside these neighborhoods, and EPA may identify additional properties or neighborhoods for which remediation for risks from lead in soil is necessary.

#### **Response Activities (to date):**

The EPA began investigating a former solder manufacturer in East Trenton in 2018 and found elevated lead levels on nearby residential properties. However, the EPA determined that the lead contamination was not caused by the solder manufacturer. Beginning in 2020, the EPA performed extensive research and a field investigation to determine whether the former potteries caused lead contamination in the soil. The EPA began sampling residential properties, schools, and parks within the Top Road and East Trenton neighborhoods in 2023. Upon discovery of lead contamination on school property, the EPA started work with the school district to develop a plan that would protect the school community from lead contamination in the soil. School officials have closed play areas, and the EPA has installed temporary protective covers over the impacted areas. Additional removal actions are anticipated to address lead contaminated soil at residential properties.

#### **Need for NPL Listing:**

In 2020 the state of New Jersey requested that the EPA evaluate the site for a removal action and possible inclusion on the NPL because of the lead contamination that was discovered in East Trenton. Other federal and state cleanup response programs were evaluated but are not viable at this time because of the potentially large number of properties that will require cleanup and the significant resources needed to continue to characterize the contaminated areas. The state of New Jersey provided the EPA with a letter of support for placing this site on the NPL in June 2024.

*[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]*

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](https://www.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsLanding.aspx) can be found on the Internet at <https://www.cdc.gov/TSP/ToxFAQs/ToxFAQsLanding.aspx> or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.