



## FACT SHEET (June 22, 2006) ARSENIC CONTAMINATION IN SOUTH MINNEAPOLIS

### What is arsenic? How is it harmful?

Arsenic is a naturally occurring metal found at low levels in soil and minerals. Arsenic compounds have been used as pesticides. Breathing very high levels of arsenic can give you a sore throat or irritated lungs. Breathing lower levels of arsenic can result in nausea, vomiting, blood problems and a feeling of “pins and needles” in hands and feet. Ingesting (eating) lower levels of arsenic for a long time can cause a darkening of the skin and the appearance of what look like small warts on the hands, feet or torso. Federal health officials have determined that arsenic causes cancer in humans. Ingesting arsenic can increase the risk of skin cancer and cancer in the lungs, bladder, liver, kidney and prostate. Inhaling arsenic can increase the risk of lung cancer. Children may be more susceptible to arsenic than adults, and there is some evidence suggesting that long-term exposure to arsenic in children may result in lower IQ scores. Arsenic can cross the placenta and has been found in fetal tissue and breast milk.<sup>1</sup>

### Why is there arsenic contamination in South Minneapolis?

For years, the CMC Heartland site located at Hiawatha and East 28<sup>th</sup> Street in South Minneapolis was used to manufacture pesticides containing arsenic as a form of grasshopper control. The site was discovered in 1994, when State transportation officials were doing tests for reconstruction of Hiawatha. On the site itself, arsenic concentrations as high as 18,000 parts per million (PPM) have been found. This is more than 1,800 times background levels.<sup>2</sup> Soil samples taken at homes in the East Phillips neighborhood have shown levels of arsenic that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers hazardous. EPA believes that the arsenic got into residential yards when dust from pesticide operations blew into yards over a period of decades.<sup>3</sup>

### Has anyone cleaned up the arsenic contamination at the pesticide company site?

During the fall of 2004, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture oversaw contractors who excavated and disposed of arsenic contaminated soil in the central “hot spot” at the CMC Heartland site and replaced it with clean fill. Excavation was done to a depth of 27 feet and more than 18,000 cubic yards of arsenic contaminated soil was disposed of off-site. Since groundwater beneath the site had as high as 250,000 parts per billion of arsenic, it is important that contamination not spread to the Mississippi River where it might affect drinking water.<sup>4</sup> Groundwater is still being monitored. Costs are being paid by the responsible parties associated with the site.<sup>5</sup>

### What has been done so far to find out which yards are contaminated with arsenic?

Since January 2004, the EPA has been involved in activities to test and clean up yards in the East Phillips area, which the EPA calls the South Minneapolis Neighborhood Soil Contamination Site

<sup>1</sup> Taken from Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR) *ToxFAQs for Arsenic* updated as of September 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Department of Agriculture, *CMC Heartland Lite Yard Site*, October 2000.

<sup>3</sup> USEPA, *Sampling Strategy will Provide Details on Arsenic, South Minneapolis Neighborhood Soil Contamination Site Minneapolis*, Minn August 2005, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Minnesota Department of Agriculture, *Proposed Plan for Cleanup at the CMC Heartland Lite Yard Site Minneapolis, Minnesota* March 2004, p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Memo of Com'r. G. Hugoson 1/13/06

(Site). As of mid-June 2006, the EPA has tested approximately 3,100 properties in South Minneapolis.<sup>6</sup> Homes, day care facilities, schools and parks have been tested.

### **Which yards are being cleaned up?**

The EPA is now cleaning up yards that have more than 95 parts per million (PPM) of arsenic in the soil. This is about 10 times the normal level for Minneapolis. According to the EPA, this high a level of contamination can result in “acute” health problems, namely health problems in a short time, allowing the EPA to use funds from its Emergency Response Branch to do the clean up. The EPA has identified and cleaned up 61 yards so far with contamination levels over 95 PPM. They are also using Emergency Response funds to test which yards are contaminated. Approximately \$2 million in federal funds has been allocated under this program.<sup>7</sup>

### **What can you expect will be done if your yard is being cleaned up?**

Contractors hired by the EPA are supposed to remove 12 inches of soil where there is now grass and 18 inches of soil in garden or play areas, replacing the contaminated soil with clean soil, planting grass and restoring vegetation.<sup>8</sup>

### **When are the other contaminated yards going to be cleaned up?**

We don't know yet. State officials believe that any level of contamination above 30 PPM significantly increases lifetime cancer risks<sup>9</sup> and, since September 2004 have asked that the EPA clean up all yards with 30 PPM or more of arsenic.<sup>10</sup> As of early June, the EPA knew of 230 yards that were between normal levels (10 PPM) and the current 95 PPM cut-off point. EPA has informed us that emergency funds can't be used to clean up these yards. In order to clean up yards that have lower levels of arsenic, but are still contaminated, the Site will have to be granted more money through the EPA Remedial Program. The Site has to be included on the “National Priorities List” to receive these funds. According to the EPA, it is likely that the final evaluation of the Site so that it can be eligible for this level of clean up will happen this fall.<sup>11</sup> No date has been set for the actual clean-up of the remaining contaminated yards.

### **Are there other chemicals in your yard or home that may be harmful to your family?**

South Minneapolis is also an area with high levels of lead contamination from leaded gasoline and peeling lead paint. Minneapolis has received a federal grant specifically to test homes in the East Phillips neighborhood for lead and remove contamination at no cost to families.

### **What can you do to provide the best protection to your children and your family from contaminated soils?**

Limit contact with contaminated soil. Wear gloves and a mask if you work in the garden, Wear a mask if you rake or mow the lawn. Remove shoes before entering the house. Vacuum and dust often. Wash hands, especially of children before bedtime or eating.<sup>12</sup> If you suspect that you or your children have had too much contact with contaminated soils, tests on hair and fingernails can measure exposure to arsenic over the past 6-12 months.<sup>13</sup>

Questions on this fact sheet? Contact Paula Maccabee, 651-646-8890, pmaccabee@visi.com

<sup>6</sup> Email R. Anderson, MN Dept. of Agriculture, 6/19/06.

<sup>7</sup> Phone conversation with Tim Prendiville, 6/1/06

<sup>8</sup> Phone conversation with Tim Prendiville, 6/1/06.

<sup>9</sup> Minnesota Department of Agriculture, *Proposed Plan for Cleanup at the CMC Heartland Lite Yard Site Minneapolis, Minnesota* March 2004, p. 3. Associated with a lifetime cancer risk exceeding  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  Minnesota's standard for significance.

<sup>10</sup> Letter of Com'r. G. Hugoson to USEPA, 9/21/04.

<sup>11</sup> Phone conversation with Tim Prendiville, 6/1/06/

<sup>12</sup> See Minnesota Department of Health, *Environmental Health Information Reducing Your Contact with Contaminated Soils*

<sup>13</sup> ASTDR *ToxFAC Arsenic*, updated September 2005.



## **CONTACT INFORMATION FOR COMMUNITY CONCERNS ABOUT ARSENIC CONTAMINATION IN SOUTH MINNEAPOLIS**

**To get your yard tested for arsenic contamination:**

EPA Community Involvement Coordinator, Cheryl Allen 312-353-6196 or 800-621-8431, ext. 36196 [allen.cheryl@epa.gov](mailto:allen.cheryl@epa.gov)

**To find out the results of testing that was already done for arsenic contamination:**

EPA Remediation Project Manager Tim Prendiville, 312-886-5122 [prendiville.timothy@epa.gov](mailto:prendiville.timothy@epa.gov)

**To find out when your yard is scheduled for clean up:**

EPA Remediation Project Manager Tim Prendiville, 312-886-5122 [prendiville.timothy@epa.gov](mailto:prendiville.timothy@epa.gov)

**To discuss questions or concerns about the way in which contractors cleaned up your yard or any damage that was caused in the process:**

EPA Remediation Project Manager Tim Prendiville, 312-886-5122 [prendiville.timothy@epa.gov](mailto:prendiville.timothy@epa.gov)

**To get advice on how to reduce the risk to your children and family from arsenic and other soil contamination until your yard can be cleaned up:**

Minnesota Department of Health, Daniel Pena, 651-201-4920 [daniel.pena@state.mn.us](mailto:daniel.pena@state.mn.us)

**To get your yard or home tested for lead contamination:**

Minneapolis Healthy Homes Program, Brian Olson 612-673-3595  
[brian.olson@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:brian.olson@ci.minneapolis.mn.us)

**To get an update on what is happening with the EPA clean up and plans to remove arsenic from yards with contamination below the current 95 parts per million cut-off:**

EPA Remediation Project Manager Tim Prendiville, 312-886-5122 [prendiville.timothy@epa.gov](mailto:prendiville.timothy@epa.gov)

**To get an update on what has happened with the clean up of the CMC Heartland pesticide site and find out about ground water monitoring:**

Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Robert Anderson 651-297-5731  
[robert.anderson@state.mn.us](mailto:robert.anderson@state.mn.us)

**To find out more about environmental problems in the neighborhood:**

Women's Environmental Institute, Karen Clark, [Karen@w-e-i.org](mailto:Karen@w-e-i.org) 651-583-0705  
East Phillips Improvement Coalition, Board Chair Carol Pass, (612) 722-6485

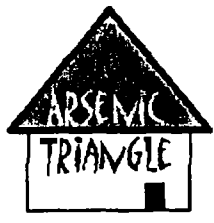
**To learn how you can help advocate for yourself and your community to clean up arsenic and lead contamination:**

Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota, 612-436-5402 or Paula Maccabee at 651-646-8890, [pmaccabee@visi.com](mailto:pmaccabee@visi.com)

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# Are You Safe?



Maybe not.

- ✓ Do you live near the Arsenic Triangle?
- ✓ Does your yard have arsenic contamination?
- ✓ How can we keep our children and families safe?
- ✓ Do you want a free yard soil test from the EPA?
- ✓ Will the EPA clean-up your yard?

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**Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (EJAM)** is hosting a community meeting about the Arsenic Triangle in South Minneapolis. Come voice your questions and concerns!

**June 22, 2006**  
**6:30 – 8:00 p.m.**

**Minneapolis Midtown YWCA**  
*(2121 E. Lake Street)*

**What is the Arsenic Triangle?**  
 For over 30 years, pesticide companies operated at the Arsenic Triangle site, located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Hiawatha Ave and 28th St. Over time, the wind has blown the Arsenic-contaminated dust to nearby neighborhoods. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently testing and cleaning-up yards. Come to a meeting hosted by the community and learn about arsenic and what you can do to protect your family.

Women's Environmental Institute

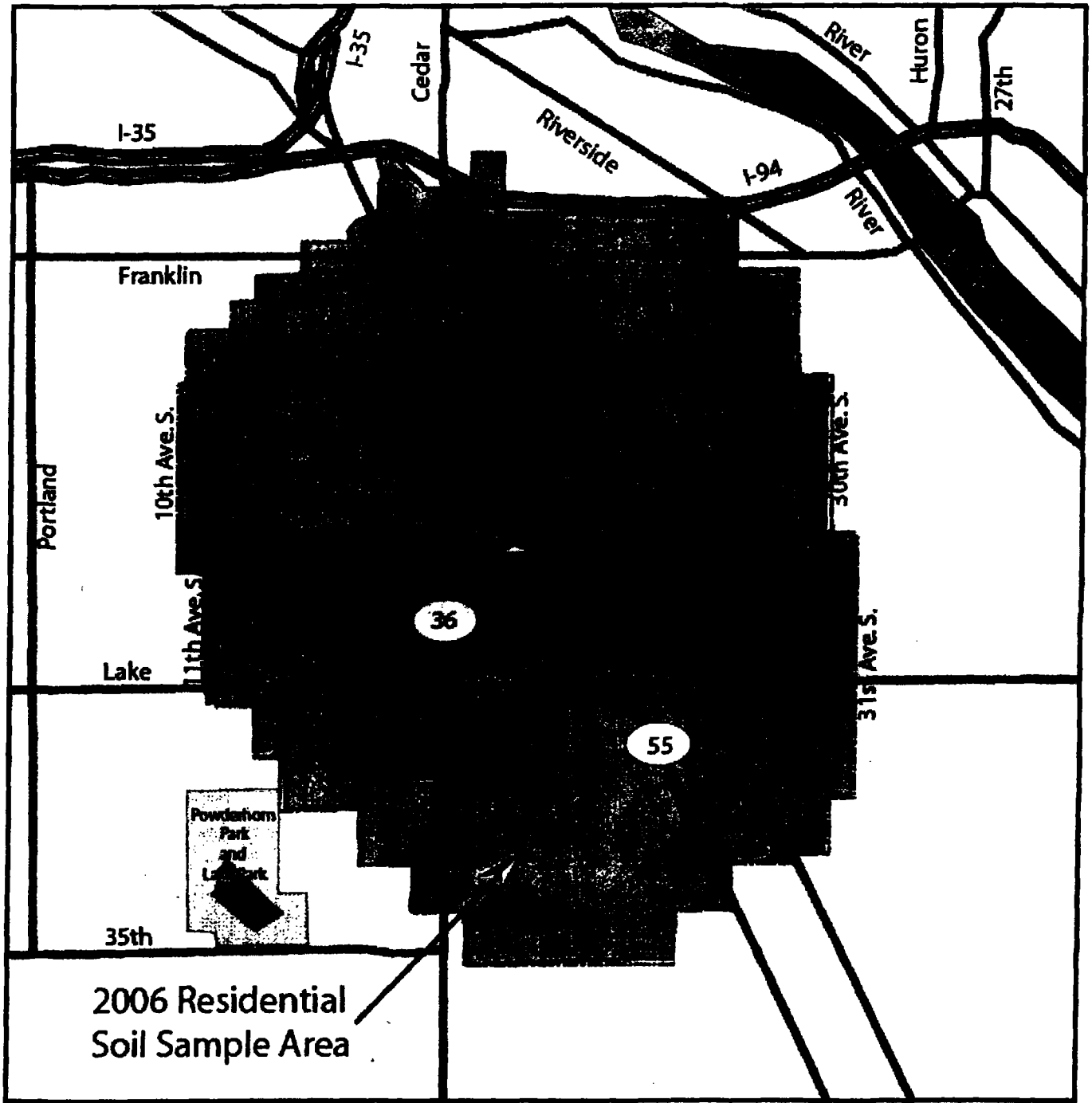
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For more information or to get your home tested, contact EJAM at 612-436-5402 or [ejadvocates@yahoo.com](mailto:ejadvocates@yahoo.com)  
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