
Excavation to End for Winter; Community Activities Continue

U.S. Smelter and Lead Refinery Superfund Site

East Chicago, Indiana

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Contact information

For questions, comments or for more information about the USS Lead cleanup, contact these EPA team members:

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You may call EPA toll-free at 800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., weekdays, or visit www.epa.gov/uss-lead-superfund-site.

Access agreements

EPA staff may contact you and ask you to sign a document called an access agreement. The access agreement allows EPA workers to come onto your property to collect soil samples and clean your property.

As winter approaches, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has shut down most sampling and cleanup activities in the residential areas near the USS Lead Superfund site. Sampling, excavation and restoration will resume in the spring. In the meantime, EPA will continue to update local public information repositories with site documents, present community workshops on the Superfund Program and mail updates to residents.

Over the last several months, EPA workers have conducted in-home cleaning of Zone 1 buildings and begun excavation and in-home cleaning in Zones 2 and 3. Below is a breakdown of all activities.

Zone 1

From August through the first week of November, at the West Calumet Housing Complex, EPA officials:

- Surveyed homes to get access agreements to conduct indoor sampling.
- Sampled around 270 homes to determine indoor lead levels.
- Temporarily relocated about 270 households to hotels and cleaned their homes.

Zone 2

On Nov. 1 EPA workers began cleanup activities in Zone 2 to manage elevated lead and arsenic levels in residential soil. EPA first worked on the properties with high lead and arsenic levels in the top 6 inches of soil.

In total, EPA excavated, backfilled and restored 17 properties during November. Cleanup actions have stopped for the winter months but will continue in the spring. Along with yard cleanups, EPA offered indoor dust sampling to residents. Dust was collected and tested for lead and arsenic. Houses that have results above safe levels will be scheduled for an indoor cleaning beginning in December.

EPA is continuing to conduct soil sampling in Zone 2 to develop engineering plans for the cleanup of the entire site. To date, EPA has sampled soil from 476 of the 596 properties in Zone 2. Soil sampling will occur occasionally through the winter months as weather permits and access is granted on the few remaining properties.

Before soil cleanup resumes in 2017, EPA officials will meet with each property owner to discuss details of the work on their property. In general, workers will dig up and remove contaminated soil about 2-feet deep and replace it with clean soil, including 6 inches of topsoil. Then they will put sod on the clean soil, restoring each yard to its original condition. All work will be done at no cost to the homeowner. Contaminated soil from Zone 2 will be transported to a licensed landfill for proper disposal.

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Zone 3

The Calumet neighborhood, or Zone 3 of the site, contains 468 properties. EPA received access agreements and sampled soil at 418 of the Zone 3 properties. After sampling, EPA notified the property owners of their results. If your property was sampled and you have not received your results, contact EPA project managers Tim Drexler or Tom Alcamo (*see box, Page 1*). Soil in some of the sampled Zone 3 properties contains high levels of lead and arsenic. In October, EPA workers began cleanup of the 38 most contaminated Zone 3 properties under an agreement with the potentially responsible parties. Completion of that work is planned by mid-December. About 200 additional properties will be cleaned in the spring.

Before the 2017 work begins, EPA officials will meet with each property owner to discuss cleanup details. In general, workers will dig up and remove contaminated soil about 2-feet deep and replace it with clean soil, including 6 inches of topsoil. Then they will put sod on the clean soil, restoring each yard to its original condition. All work will be done at no cost to the

homeowner. Contaminated soil will be transported to a licensed landfill for proper disposal.

EPA also conducted indoor dust sampling, primarily at the properties identified with the most contaminated soil. Some of the sampled homes had lead and arsenic levels above safe levels. EPA began cleaning these homes in November to remove contaminated dust. EPA officials will continue to offer the same service to other Zone 3 homes that have tainted dust.

Site location and history

The USS Lead site comprises two areas called “operable units.” Operable Unit 1, or OU1, is a 322-acre residential area bounded by East Chicago Avenue on the north, East 151st Street on the south, the Indiana Harbor Canal on the west and Parrish Avenue on the east. OU2 is the former USS Lead facility on 151st Street. EPA often divides sites into OUs based on how the land was used – in this case residential versus industrial use. OU1 was then divided into three zones (*see map on last page*).



Map showing OUI, the residential area of the USS Lead Superfund site. An agreement has been reached with responsible parties on cleanup work in Zones 1 and 3. Work in Zone 2 is being done with federal funding.

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