

# U.S. EPA Plans More Soil Sampling in Yards

**Old American Zinc Plant Superfund Site  
Fairmont, Illinois**

**May 2017**

## You're invited

U.S. EPA and other state and local officials will be available for one-on-one discussions about the Old American Zinc Plant sampling project at an open house:

**Tuesday, June 13th**  
4 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Fairmont City Community Center  
4011 Cookson Road

## Access agreements

This fact sheet includes an access agreement for you to sign allowing U.S. EPA to take a few soil samples from your yard if necessary at no cost to you. U.S. EPA will accept the forms either by mail or at the open house June 13th.

## Mail Access Agreements to:

CH2M

Attn: Rodrigo Monico-Barros

135 S. 84th St.

Suite 400

Milwaukee, WI 53214

Or email to:

oldamericanzinc@ch2m.com

## For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the cleanup, contact these U.S. EPA team members:

*For technical questions*

**Sheila Desai**

Remedial Project Manager

312-353-4150

desai.sheila@epa.gov

*For general questions*

**Ruth Muhtsun**

Community Involvement

Coordinator

312-886-6595

muhtsun.ruth@epa.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will be doing additional soil sampling this summer or fall in yards, properties and some alleyways near the Old American Zinc Plant site (*See map below*). Sampling is needed at certain previously sampled properties to collect additional data and at properties that have not been sampled. Those samples will be tested for lead and other metals. Based on the results, U.S. EPA will determine if any cleanup is needed and the best way to get it done. Sampling and any necessary cleanup will be done at no cost to property owners or residents.



*Aerial photograph showing residential area surrounding the zinc site.*

The federal Agency will need the property owner's permission before any sampling or cleanup can begin. An agreement form is included with this fact sheet for your convenience. Once we receive your signed form, U.S. EPA representatives will contact you to schedule sampling. If you rent, please contact your landlord or talk to an U.S. EPA representative who can contact your landlord on your behalf. U.S. EPA representatives will also be going door-to-door during the week of June 12th, seeking permission from property owners.

The federal Agency will also host an availability session on June 13th at Fairmont City Community Center (*see adjacent box for open house information*). At the open house, U.S. EPA representatives will be available to discuss and answer questions about the latest sampling project and update people on the Old American Zinc Plant cleanup. U.S. EPA officials will also have access agreements on hand for homeowners to sign.

## Site background

The Old American Zinc Plant site is a 132-acre area located at 2575 Kings Highway in Fairmont City. The site includes a former zinc smelting operation and nearby residential, commercial and vacant properties. There are also drainage sections and areas of shallow groundwater within the site. "Groundwater" is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water. American Zinc ran a zinc smelter there between 1916 and 1953. The company produced zinc, lead and other metals. The primary waste byproduct of smelting is slag, which was disposed of along the site's northern and western boundaries.

American Zinc stopped its zinc operations in 1953. From 1953 to 1967, processes were limited to roasting ores for other smelter facilities and the production of sulfuric acid. Between 1967 and 1978, the company moved or tore down buildings and other facilities. XTRA Intermodal Inc. leased the site from American Zinc in 1976 for use as a truck and trailer leasing and storage operation. XTRA purchased the property in 1979 and closed its operation around 2003. The site is now vacant.

## Cleanup history

Illinois EPA began investigating the site in 1994 after complaints about dust. The state agency found no evidence of airborne contamination but did find high levels of lead, arsenic, cadmium and zinc in soil samples. Waste and sediment (mud) samples taken on and near the site also showed inorganic and pesticide contamination.

Illinois asked U.S. EPA's assistance to deal with potential threats from hazardous waste at the site. In 1999, U.S. EPA conducted a follow-up assessment at the location. Data from that study indicated high lead levels that exceeded the safety limits for lead in residential and industrial parcels.

In 2002 and 2003, U.S. EPA negotiated with Blue Tee Corp., one of the companies thought to have caused or contributed to the contamination, to perform a cleanup. After taking additional soil samples at 462 properties, the company removed contaminated soil from 152 properties, backfilled the properties with clean soil and planted grass.

In 2005, U.S. EPA named Blue Tee, the General Services Administration and XTRA Intermodal as responsible parties and ordered additional cleanup work. As the leading responsible party, Blue Tee investigated the extent of contamination from 2006 to

2008 including sampling at 25 additional properties. The company found that some properties near the site still have high lead levels and other metals in the soil from the slag piles and from loose slag that was used as fill material.

Investigators took sediment samples from drainage ditches, Rose Creek and Schoenberger Creek and found metal concentrations in the ditches and in areas of Rose Creek nearest the site. They also found metals in area surface waters. Groundwater samples from shallow monitoring wells found concentrations of zinc, cadmium, manganese and arsenic. This groundwater, however, is not used for drinking water.

Based on the findings of the investigations, U.S. EPA issued a document called a *Record of Decision*, or ROD, in 2012. The ROD describes the selected cleanup actions for the site. The major components of the cleanup plan include:

- Excavation of contaminated soil inside and outside of the facility area. Excavated soil will then be consolidated into an area on the facility property.
- Capping the consolidated contaminated soil with a 24-inch low permeability, compacted soil barrier layer and a 12-inch vegetation cover system.
- Use of institutional controls that limit future use of the property.
- Groundwater monitoring.

In 2014, U.S. EPA entered into another agreement with Blue Tee and the General Services Administration to do the remedial design of the cleanup plan. During the remedial design phase, technical plans for the selected cleanup are outlined. In 2015, additional data was collected on-site and at 14 adjacent residential, commercial, and vacant properties in order to complete the remedial design. However, in 2016, the company responsible for Blue Tee's work at the site filed for bankruptcy and stopped doing the work.

On Dec. 6, 2016, the federal Agency issued a notice to the responsible parties for U.S. EPA to take over the work in order to complete the remedial design at the site. That phase is currently in progress at the site.

In April 2016, U.S. EPA added the Old American Zinc site to the National Priorities List, or NPL, due to high levels of metals, including lead, found on the plant property, in nearby residential yards and in Rose Creek. The NPL is a roster of hazardous waste sites in the United States that are eligible for cleanup under U.S.

EPA's Superfund program. U.S. EPA also added the Old American Zinc Plant site to the NPL to allow the maximum amount of authority and resources to aide cleanup efforts.

Prior to being added to the NPL, the Old American Zinc Plant site was handled under the Superfund Alternative Approach. The cleanup process for a Superfund Alternative Approach location is similar to a NPL site but is not funded by the federal government.

### Contaminants of concern

Here is a summary of the pollutants found on the Old American Zinc site:

**Lead:** Lead is highly toxic and can cause a range of health effects, from behavioral problems and learning disabilities, to seizures and death. The most common way lead gets into the body is from lead-based paint and lead-contaminated soil dust. Children seven years old and younger, and pregnant or nursing women, are most vulnerable to the effects of lead. As children grow and develop, the lead can accumulate in their bodies over time, where it is stored in bones along with calcium. During pregnancy, lead is released from bones as maternal calcium and is used to help form the bones of the fetus.

**Arsenic:** Exposure to higher-than-average levels of arsenic can cause death. Exposure to lower levels for a long time can cause a discoloration of the skin and the appearance of small corns or warts.

**Cadmium:** Eating food or drinking water with very high levels can severely irritate the stomach, leading to vomiting and diarrhea.

**Zinc:** Low levels of zinc are essential for maintaining good health. But exposure to large amounts can cause stomach cramps, anemia, and changes in cholesterol levels.

**Manganese:** Manganese is an essential nutrient, and eating a small amount of it each day is important to staying healthy. However, at high levels, it can cause damage to the brain and nervous system.

More information about the health effects of these contaminants can be found at <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp>.

### For more information

Official documents about the Old American Zinc site can be viewed at:

Fairmont City Village Hall  
2601 N. 41st St.  
and

Fairmont City Library Center, 2870 N. 44th St.

### Website:

[www.epa.gov/superfund/old-american-zinc](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/old-american-zinc)

### How to reduce exposure to soil contaminants

You should take steps to protect children from contaminated soil. Pregnant women should seek prenatal care to protect their developing infants. You can limit children's exposure to dirt in the following ways:

- Cover areas of exposed dirt with grass, flowers, mulch or concrete.
- Wash down very dusty areas with a hose.
- Discourage children from playing in the dirt, gravel or ground covers, such as sidewalks and driveways.
- Supervise young children to prevent them from eating dirt.
- Wash children's hands often, especially before they eat and before nap time and bedtime.
- Clean or remove shoes before entering your home to avoid tracking in soil contamination.
- Make sure children eat nutritious, low-fat meals high in iron and calcium, such as spinach and dairy products. Children with good diets absorb less lead.


To prevent ingestion of contaminated dust, you should:

- Place a door mat at the door.
- Vacuum carpets and drapes.
- Dust with an oiled cloth.
- Mop floors often.
- Wipe your feet before entering your home.
- Keep windows closed as much as possible to reduce dirt in the home.
- Replace furnace filters often.

# Upcoming Open House about the Old American Zinc Plant Superfund Site

**Tuesday, June 13th**  
Fairmont City Community Center  
4011 Cookson Road

4 p.m. – 7 p.m. – Availability session where you can meet one-on-one with environmental and health officials.

 *Reproduced on Recycled Paper*

**OLD AMERICAN ZINC SITE: More Sampling Planned**

Region 5  
Superfund Division (SI-6J)  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency





UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5
77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD (SR-6J)
CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

CONSENT FOR ACCESS TO PROPERTY FOR SAMPLING AND CLEANUP
OLD AMERICAN ZINC PLANT SUPERFUND SITE, RESIDENTIAL AREA

I consent to officers, employees, contractors, and authorized representatives of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency entering and having access to my property for the purpose of sampling soil and inventorying existing features (landscaping, patios, decks, etc.) and, if required, doing a cleanup, all at no cost to me. The cleanup would include: (1) preparing for and excavating soil from my property; (2) backfilling the excavated area(s) with clean soil and/or backfill; and (3) restoring any grass or other vegetation or structures to their pre-excitation state. I realize that these actions taken by U.S. EPA are undertaken pursuant to its response and enforcement responsibilities under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980, as amended, 42 U.S.C. Section 9601 et seq, known as the Superfund law. These activities are necessary to implement the cleanup of contamination in the soil. I give this written permission voluntarily with knowledge of my right to refuse and without threats or promises of any kind. I understand U.S. EPA or authorized representatives of U.S. EPA will contact me in advance before soil sampling begins, and if necessary, before soil removal and replacement to discuss the steps involved in the cleanup and restoration of my property. I also understand if there is any damage to structures such as sidewalks caused by the work, then U.S. EPA or authorized representatives of U.S. EPA shall repair such damage at no cost to me.

PLEASE FILL IN FOR YOUR PROPERTY

Addresses of Property: \_\_\_\_\_
Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_
Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_
I am the [ ] Owner [ ] Tenant
If any of the following apply to residents at the Property, please check:
[ ] There are children under the age of seven years living at this residence.
[ ] There are pregnant/nursing women living at this residence.
APPROVAL FOR SAMPLING AND CLEANUP
(OWNERS PLEASE FILL IN)
[ ] I am the owner, and I grant access to my property
[ ] I am the owner, and I do not grant access to my property
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER INFORMATION

OWNERS: PROVIDE MAILING ADDRESS IF YOU DO NOT LIVE AT THE PROPERTY
TENANTS: PROVIDE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR YOUR LANDLORD

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: CH2M
Rodrigo Monico-Barros
135 S. 84th St.
Suite 400
Milwaukee, WI 53214

E-mail: oldamericanzinc@ch2m.com