



EPA Begins Sampling Contaminated Soil

Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company Site

LaSalle County, Illinois

July 2018

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company cleanup contact these EPA team members:

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On the Web:

www.epa.gov/superfund/matthiessen-hegeler-zinc

ATSDR Fact Sheets (ToxFAQs) on the Web:

Arsenic, lead, cadmium, chromium, manganese, lead
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sampled soil in February and March 2018 at residential properties next to the Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company facility to determine which properties may require cleanup. EPA collected soil samples from front and back yards, as well as any other uncovered areas on the property. Samples were collected from the following depths: 0 to 6 inches, 6 to 12 inches, 12 to 18 inches and 18 to 24 inches.

EPA will provide results of the sampling data to property owners. If it is determined there is contamination above EPA's action level at your property, EPA will dig up and remove contaminated soil and replace your yard with clean topsoil and restore landscaping. The sampling and any necessary cleanup will be conducted at no cost to property owners or residents.

The analysis of the data and the schedule of the cleanups is being performed in order of priority. The priority groups are based on the anticipated risk to the residents of the property. Properties with the highest lead and/or arsenic levels in the surface soils (0 to 6 inches) and sensitive populations (children under 7, pregnant women) will be cleaned up first; properties with lead and/or arsenic levels that exceed the action levels in more than half of the yard areas will be cleaned up next; and properties with high levels of other chemicals (cadmium, hexavalent chromium, manganese, and zinc) are currently being evaluated and may be cleaned up at a later date.

During EPA's study of the area, community members have voiced their concerns on how a Superfund cleanup can impact their lives and community. Below are answers to some of the frequently asked questions EPA has received.

How can people be exposed to contaminants in soil?

Exposure can happen through skin contact, breathing in contaminated dust, and more commonly accidental ingestion. Accidental ingestion may occur when normal activities leave soil on fingers and hands, increasing the chance that contaminants could be swallowed. Children are more likely to be exposed because of their frequent hand-to-mouth activity.

Doing simple things like regular housekeeping and good hygiene can help you and your family lower the risk of exposure to contaminated soil and dust. Also taking off your shoes when you enter your home can prevent tracking contaminated soil inside. Remember that pets can carry in soil dust on their paws.

Reduce exposure during outdoor activities by adding bushes or grass to bare areas to keep soil in place. Avoid mowing over areas of sparse lawn during periods of dry weather. Take special care when gardening or harvesting by using gardening gloves (leather is better than cloth), keep garden tools and

gloves in one area of the garage or shed, and periodically rinse tools off. Thoroughly wash and peel all home-grown vegetables before eating or cooking them. If possible, grow vegetables in a raised garden bed filled with clean soil.

How does EPA select properties to be sampled?

Sampling priority will be given to residential properties in closer proximity to the former Matthiessen and Hegeler Zinc Company industrial site, and those with young children and pregnant or nursing women. Priority will also be given to nonresidential properties with sensitive populations (daycares, schools, playgrounds, nursing homes, etc.)

How does EPA remove soil around foundations?

Depending on how accessible the area is, EPA contractors will use equipment like a small excavator, skid steer, or by hand with a shovel. For yard areas against a foundation (such as a house or a garage), excavation would start 1 foot away from the foundation. The excavation would be sloped (1 foot away, 1 foot down) to help provide additional stability and protection around the foundation.

If landscaping is removed, will EPA replace it?

EPA will replace perennial plants, but annual plants will not be replaced. EPA contractors will meet with each owner at their property to plan the work and discuss the landscaping. Any perennial plants that will be removed during cleanup will be inventoried by a landscaper and replaced. The list will be provided to the property owner prior to the work beginning to ensure the landscaping list is complete and accurate. The perennial plants on the inventory will be purchased and installed by the landscaper after cleanup on the property is complete. The replacement plants will be nursery grade plants so they will likely not be the same size as the existing plants. Mulch and other landscaping features (such as borders) will also be installed by the landscaper to match what was present before cleanup. Finally, the landscaping will be watered by the EPA contractor for a period of time (typically four weeks) to help the plants get established and minimize the inconvenience to the property owner. Soil can also be removed around plants that are left in place. However, most of the plants and soil in the gardens should be removed to help provide the most effective cleanup. Property owners can choose to transplant certain plants by washing soil away from the roots and replanting.

How does EPA remove soil around trees and large shrubs?

If work can be performed around the trees or large shrubs, the soil will be removed with hand shovels and by

working around large roots to protect the tree or shrub. It may be necessary for EPA contractors to remove some trees if there would be a lot of contaminated soil left in the tree root zone.

Does EPA have an arborist that is available for consultation?

EPA's contractor will have a landscaper to help plan the work at each property and to install the landscaping after cleanup is complete. The landscaping staff will be knowledgeable about different plant species and care if a property owner has specific concerns about a tree.

How does EPA handle yards that have pools?

In-ground pools will remain in place. In yards that have an aboveground pool that is set up year-round, the soil removal would stay 1-foot away from the pool wall and supports to help protect the pool. If the pool is up seasonally, the property owner should let EPA staff know. It may be possible to coordinate work in a season when the pool is not installed.

Will alleyways or driveways be dug up?

Asphalt, concrete, gravel or other constructed areas will not be dug up. Alleyways or driveways may be dug up if the area is mainly dirt or grass.

Does EPA sample crawlspaces?

EPA usually does not sample crawlspaces since they are not areas where people often come in contact with the soil. If you have a basement crawlspace with a dirt floor that is accessible from inside the home, please let EPA know so we can evaluate the space and determine if sampling is appropriate.

Why is the cleanup not occurring all at one time?

The federal government funds EPA on a yearly basis. That funding determines the amount of work that can be completed each year. The total cost of the sampling and cleanup has been estimated to cost more than \$100 million for the 4,500 properties at the site. Sampling and cleanup work is estimated to take between 12 and 17 years due to the large number of properties as well as funding constraints.

Will property taxes be lowered due to the impact of a known "Superfund site" designation on the community?

Property taxes are estimated by the LaSalle County Assessor and not EPA. EPA will support the county and city as needed to document any action(s) that are required or have taken place at a property.