

# Healthy Living in the Silver Valley and Coeur d'Alene Basin



EPA# 910F25001

Updated July 2025

Photo by EPA

The Silver Valley and Coeur d'Alene Basin are great places to live, work, and play. Knowing the facts about our area will help keep you and your family healthy. Past mining practices left behind large volumes of lead and other heavy metals in Basin soils. Since the 1980s, we have made great progress in reducing risks from the contamination. For example, over 7,100 properties have been cleaned up. Even so, lead and other metals remain in areas that have not been cleaned up. Read on for tips to limit exposure and safely enjoy this beautiful environment.

## Lead in our area

- In our area, lead from past mining practices is often found in:
  - Soil around historic mill and mine sites.
  - Soil along riverbanks and within floodplains.
  - Soil under clean soil caps, under foundations, in the dirt floor of crawl spaces, cellars, and insulated attics.
  - Dust in homes.
- Lead paint can be present in homes built before 1978  
Learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/lead/protect-your-family-exposures-lead>
- Some toys and ceramics may contain lead.

## Lead Poses a Risk

Lead is most dangerous to young children, pregnant women, and unborn children. It can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and slows growth and development of bones and muscles. Lead can pose a risk to adults, too, causing memory loss, irritability, high blood pressure, and muscle or joint pain. Lead is taken into the body by swallowing lead-contaminated dirt or water, or by inhaling air that is contaminated by lead dust.

- Small amounts of lead can harm a child -- even less than a quarter teaspoon of contaminated dust or soil.
- Young children crawling and putting hands in their mouths have the most risk.
- There is no safe level of lead exposure.

## Keep Clean, Eat Clean, Play Clean!

### Reduce lead exposure:

- Know where to play outdoors safely. If you don't know, listed contacts can help. Pay attention to local public health signs.
  - ✓ Wash your hands, especially after playing outside and before eating to keep dirt away from mouths. Teach your children how to wash hands properly.
  - ✓ Use soap and water, but not creek or river water. Bring clean water with you for washing and cleaning.
  - ✓ Wash for at least 20 seconds to remove lead particles.
  - ✓ Hand sanitizer kills germs but will not remove lead.
- Eat food at a table or on a clean surface (such as a towel or blanket) to avoid contact with contaminated dust.
- When riding ATVs, motorcycles, and bikes off-road, wear protective gear including a mask or other face covering.
- Remove dust or dirt from clothing and equipment before you return home. Until they are clean, store dusty recreational clothes, toys, and equipment outdoors or away from living areas to prevent contaminated dust from entering your home.
- Leave shoes outside your camper or tent.
- Wash pets that have played in the dirt or swum in the river before letting them into your home.

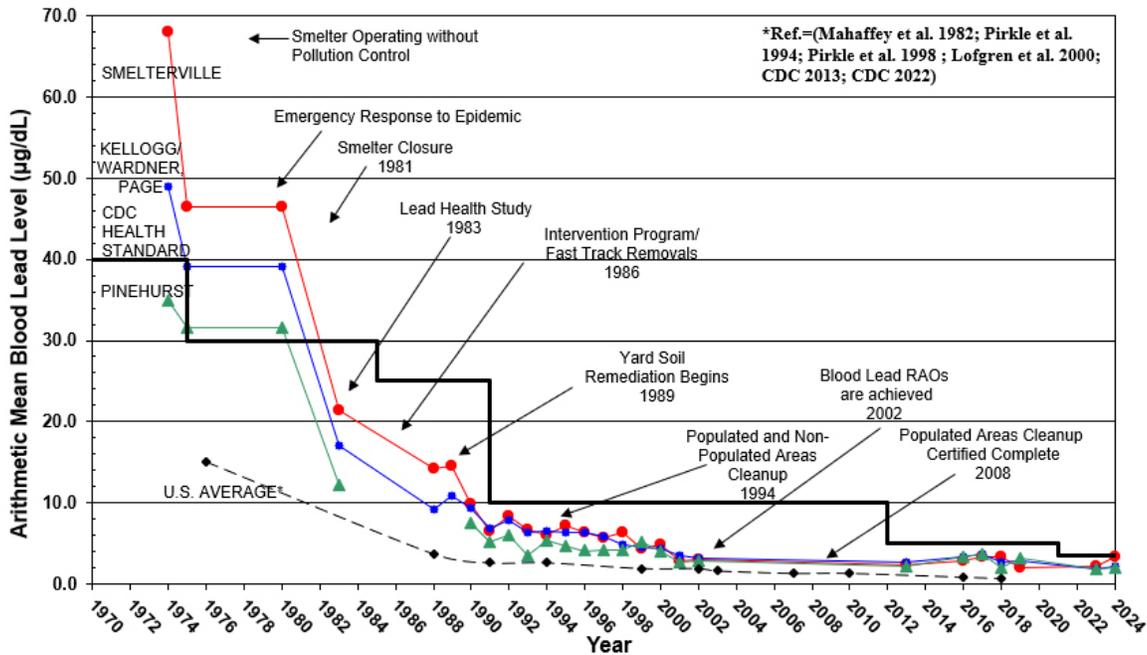


*Use soap and water to keep hands clean.*

*Photo by EPA.*

## The Cleanup

Since the cleanup began, the area has become a healthier place to live, work, and play. Yards and public spaces are getting cleaned up. Hillsides are lush and green again. The Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes draws visitors season after season. Many roads in the valley are now repaired to protect people's health from underlying contamination. Each year, the cleanup employs scores of local people. The best cleanup news of all is that children's blood lead levels have dropped sharply (see chart).



\*not enough samples in 2003-2012, 2014, 2015, 2020, & 2020-2022

Blood levels continue to drop from historic highs.

Graphic by EPA.

The cleanup is aimed at reducing risk and removing contamination. It will take a long time. Here is some priority work going on now:

- Continuing property cleanups
- Continuing to shift work to the Lower Coeur d'Alene River Basin
- Addressing recreational and wildlife areas
- Managing the local Institutional Controls Program (see Page 4)
- Cleaning up mine waste at non-operating mine and mill sites
- Providing and operating repositories and waste consolidation areas to safely secure waste soils
- Continuing public outreach and education.



The cleanup helps keep recreation safe.

Photo by EPA.

## What You Can Do...

### Have your child's blood lead tested

The only way to know your child's blood lead level is to test it. Screening is available free of cost, year-round. Each summer, Panhandle Health District's free screening event allows individuals and families to determine if they have been exposed to lead during the summer months. PHD also provides free, private consultations on how to reduce exposure to contamination. PHD: 208-783-0707.



PHD offers free lead screening year-round.

*Panhandle Health District photo. Used by permission.*

### Talk to your health care provider

Anyone identified with a high blood lead level should consult with their primary care provider. Pregnant women are encouraged to talk to their health care provider early about the risks of lead exposure during pregnancy.

### Learn whether your yard has been remediated

Find out if your yard has been cleaned up. PHD: 208-783-0707.

### Learn more about the Institutional Controls Program (ICP)

Community members help keep contamination in check by following the ICP. The ICP is a locally enforced set of regulations to control re-contamination. It is operated by PHD. Permits are needed for many types of indoor and outdoor construction activities. Permits and consultations are free. Contact the ICP before digging on your property or starting some interior projects. PHD: 208-783-0707.

### Get more info and borrow a vacuum

The PHD office at 35 Wildcat Way in Kellogg offers helpful information. Topics include local lead exposures, how to reduce risks, how lead affects the body, and information about buying and selling property in the area. PHD also loans special vacuum cleaners to residents. Frequent vacuuming can reduce in-home exposure.

PHD Phone: 208-783-0707

### Attend Citizens' Coordinating Council meetings

This citizen's forum is the main avenue for public input into Basin Commission activities.

<https://www.basincommission.com/cc>.

### Stay Informed

Join our mailing list. Contact [sherbina.debra@epa.gov](mailto:sherbina.debra@epa.gov), 206-553-0247 or 800-424-4372 , ext. 0247.

## Fish consumption advisories are in effect



- Follow advisories when consuming fish from the Coeur d'Alene River, the Chain Lakes, or Lake Coeur d'Alene.

- Learn more at <https://fishadvisory.dhw.idaho.gov>

◀ *Fishing safely keeps you and your family healthy.*

*Photo by EPA.*

## Information for real estate transactions



*Yard cleanups reduce residents' exposure to lead and other metals. Over 7,100 properties have been cleaned up to date.*

*Photo by EPA.*

The ICP tracks completed cleanups, sampling results, and property improvements. Records are commonly requested prior to land sales and loan refinancing. A request can be made online through the state's Bunker Hill/Coeur d'Alene Basin Superfund Site webpage: <https://cdabasin.idaho.gov/real-estate-property-disclosure-request-form>.

PHD: phone 208-783-0707

### **Lead-contaminated soil is part of federal lead disclosure requirements.**

- Guidelines for Property Owners Affected by Mine Waste Within the Bunker Hill Superfund Site is available at <https://www.basincommission.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Property-Owner-Guidelines-BH-2020.pdf>. This document helps property owners understand possible Superfund liability for mining-related waste.
- To learn about the obligations property sellers, landlords, real estate agents and property managers have to those purchasing or leasing a house built before 1978, please visit the EPA website: <https://www.epa.gov/lead/real-estate-disclosures-about-potential-lead-hazards>.
- Idaho law requires certain disclosures by sellers/owners of residential property and real estate brokers and salespersons regarding the condition of certain real property. Idaho Code Sections 55-2501-2518, the "Idaho Property Disclosure Act," requires seller/owners of residential real property to disclose the known presence of hazardous materials or substances to prospective buyers.

Idaho Code Sections 54-2086 and 2087 of the "Idaho Real Estate License Law" require real estate brokers and salespersons to disclose all adverse material facts actually known or which reasonably should have been known about the real estate to buyer/seller customers and clients.

## For More Information

**Rafi Ronquillo, EPA Community Involvement**  
206-638-6305, [ronquillo.rafi@epa.gov](mailto:ronquillo.rafi@epa.gov)

**Jennifer Crawford, EPA Remedial Project Manager**  
206-553-6261, [crawford.jennifer@epa.gov](mailto:crawford.jennifer@epa.gov)

**Panhandle Health District**  
Institutional Controls Program  
208-783-0707, [contactus@phd1.idaho.gov](mailto:contactus@phd1.idaho.gov)

**Idaho Department of Environmental Quality,**  
Kellogg Office  
208-783-5781, [andy.helkey@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:andy.helkey@deq.idaho.gov)

**Sharon Bosley, Executive Director**  
Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission  
208-783-2528, [sharon.bosley@deq.idaho.gov](mailto:sharon.bosley@deq.idaho.gov)

## Web Resources

**IDEQ Official Bunker Hill Superfund Site Webpage:**  
<https://cdabasin.idaho.gov>



**The Basin Environmental Improvement Project Commission**  
<https://www.basincommission.com>



**EPA – Coeur d'Alene Basin Cleanup**  
[www.epa.gov/superfund/bunker-hill](http://www.epa.gov/superfund/bunker-hill)



**EPA – Lead Health Information**  
<https://www.epa.gov/lead>



**Cleanup Newsletters: Basin Bulletin**  
<https://semspub.epa.gov/src/collection/10/SC42882>



If you need materials in an alternative format, contact **Rafi Ronquillo** • 206-638-6305.



Region 10  
1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900, MS 12-D12  
Seattle, Washington 98101  
July 2025