

NPL Partial Site Deletion Narrative

Omaha Lead
Omaha, Nebraska

On April 10, 2017, the EPA deleted 294 residential parcels of the Omaha Lead Superfund (OLS) Site located in the eastern portion of the greater metropolitan area in Omaha, Nebraska. The remaining parcels will remain on the NPL and are not being considered for deletion as part of this action. The table of 294 Properties Proposed for the Second Partial Deletion of Properties from the Omaha Lead Superfund site 2016 (EPA–HQ–SFUND–2003–0010–1849) identifies specific properties included for this proposed partial deletion. The location of the 294 properties are shown on Figure 1 “2016 Partial Deletion Omaha Lead Site” (EPA–HQ–SFUND–2003–0010–1848). This partial deletion pertains to soils, dust and deteriorating lead-based paint, where applicable, of the parcels. These types of properties include “high child impact properties areas” where children have a high risk of being exposed to site-related contaminated media.

The site includes surface soils that have been contaminated as a result of air emissions deposition from historic lead smelting and refining operations. The site extends from the Douglas-Sarpy County line on the south, north to Read Street and from the Missouri River on the east to 56th Street on the west and is centered around downtown Omaha, Nebraska, where two former lead-processing facilities operated. American Smelting and Refining Company, Inc. (ASARCO) operated a lead refinery at 500 Douglas Street in Omaha, Nebraska, for over 125 years. Aaron Ferer & Sons Company (Aaron Ferer), and later the Gould Electronics, Inc., (Gould) operated lead battery recycling plant were located at 555 Farnam Street.

Both ASARCO and Aaron Ferer/Gould facilities released lead-containing particulates into the atmosphere from their smokestacks which were deposited on surrounding residential properties. Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) monitored ambient air quality around the ASARCO facility beginning in 1984. Blood lead screening of children living in zip codes located east of 45th Street have consistently exceeded the 10 microgram per deciliter (mg/dl) health-based threshold more frequently than children living elsewhere in the county. In 1998, the Omaha City Council requested assistance from the EPA to address the high frequency of children found with elevated blood lead levels by the DCHD. At that time, the EPA began investigating the lead contamination in the Omaha area under the authority of CERCLA. The EPA initiated a removal action in 1999 to address lead-contaminated soils that exceed criteria for a time-critical removal action. The removal response consisted of excavation and replacement of lead-contaminated soil where action levels identified in the Action Memorandum are exceeded. A second removal action was initiated in August 2002 with the signing of a second Action Memorandum. This second removal action included all other residential type properties where the maximum non-foundation soil lead concentration exceeded an action level of 2,500 ppm and explicitly identified the possibility of lead-based paint as a potential contributor to lead contamination of soils within 30 inches of the foundation of a painted structure.

For OU1, EPA selected an interim remedy on December 15, 2004, to reduce the risk at high child impact properties to a lead soil level of 800 ppm. The selected remedy included excavation and replacement of soils: at properties with greatest human health risk; exceeding 800 ppm at any residential-type property; exceeding 400 ppm in high child-impact areas; and exceeding 400 ppm at properties with a child exhibiting an elevated blood-lead level. The remedy also included: final management of excavated materials; stabilization of loose and flaking exterior lead-based paint; high efficiency interior cleaning; participation in comprehensive program addressing all potential lead sources; and health education.

For OU2, EPA selected a final site remedy on May 13, 2009. The selected final remedy continued the ongoing remedial response being implemented for OU1, at remaining properties that exceeded risk-based soil lead levels with the following modifications: final soil lead action level was lowered to 400 ppm for all residential and residential-type properties; high child impact properties continued to be prioritized for response; soil sampling would continue to determine eligibility for remedial action at properties inside the Final Focus Area where sampling had not been performed; requests for soil sampling outside the focus area would be considered by EPA and decisions made on a case-by-case basis; an institutional control (IC) of a local lead hazard registry containing information about the status of EPA investigation and response at individual Omaha properties; participating residents at eligible properties would be offered high-efficiency household vacuum equipment and training on maintenance and proper usage; and education on mitigation of household lead hazards. In addition, residents at properties qualifying for soil remediation would be offered interior dust response. Dust and interior floor wipe sampling were performed when access is granted. Under most circumstances, EPA selects a residential soil lead cleanup level within the range of 400 ppm to 1,200 ppm. At this site, EPA selected a soil action level for lead in residential soils of 400 ppm. This cleanup level allows for unrestricted use. Therefore, operation and maintenance, ICs, and five-year reviews are not required for these parcels.

The EPA and the State of Nebraska, through the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ), have determined that all appropriate response actions under CERCLA and other lead abatement activities at these identified parcels have been completed and are considered protective of human health. Therefore, the EPA is deleting these 294 parcels from the NPL.