
EPA Begins Removal of Tainted Soil and Drums

Abandoned Drums 17000E Road Site
Kankakee County, Illinois

May 2017

For more information

If you have questions, comments or need more information about the Abandoned Drums 17000E Road site cleanup, contact these U.S. EPA team members:

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Starting in early May, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will begin removing contaminated soil and drums at the Abandoned Drums 17000E Road site 20 miles east of Kankakee, Ill., in Pembroke Township. U.S. EPA will dig up the lead and pesticide-contaminated soil, replace the excavated dirt with clean topsoil and restore the area. Both the contaminated soil and abandoned drums will be disposed of at a licensed landfill. The removal action is called “time-critical” because the contamination poses a potential threat to human health and the environment if not cleaned up. The cleanup will be conducted at no cost to nearby residents. Residents will see increased traffic in the area, including dump trucks.

U.S. EPA believes the nearly 2-acre property, which is wooded with few nearby residences, was used as an illegal dump site and was burned in a tire fire. During U.S. EPA’s first inspection of the site, numerous hazards were found including car parts, tires, and unlabeled drums and containers. Lab data from soil sampling showed concentrations of lead and pesticides that exceeded U.S. EPA’s safety standards. Those standards are called removal management levels, or RMLs. Samples were taken from some of the drums, but many of the containers could not be opened because they were rusted shut. The contents of the drums and containers have not yet been identified.



This is the scene that greeted environmental investigators at the 17000 E. Road site east of Kankakee, Ill. The area had been burned and contaminated with lead and pesticides.

Site history

The Abandoned Drums 17000E Road site was first discovered during an inspection conducted by Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. In late 2015, Illinois EPA requested the federal Agency's assistance in conducting a removal assessment and cleanup at the site.

U.S. EPA conducted an initial site evaluation shortly after receiving Illinois EPA's request for assistance. During this inspection, U.S. EPA responders sampled the soil and materials in some of the abandoned drums. Additional site assessment activities were conducted in March 2016 to determine the extent of contamination. Results from the sampling showed elevated levels of contaminants in the soil were limited to the burn area. There is no municipal water supply near the site, so U.S. EPA also tested the groundwater for the contaminants detected at elevated levels in the burn area. "Groundwater" is an environmental term for underground supplies of fresh water. In June 2016, water samples were taken from residences near the site that get their water from private wells. Fortunately, concentrations of all chemicals tested were below the RMLs.



Top and bottom: Abandoned drums found on the site.

