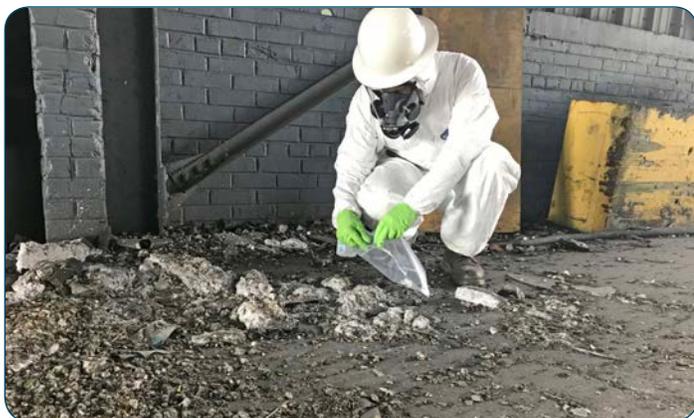




In late July, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Emergency Management Branch will begin a new time-critical cleanup action at the Former Kaiser Smelter Site (former Kaiser Aluminum facility) in Mead, Washington. Work crews will remove contaminated materials, preventing hazardous exposures to people on the site who may not be aware of the danger, and to surrounding homes and businesses.

Removing these hazardous substances will also reduce releases of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into Deadman Creek, which flows into the Little Spokane River. This will help protect fish, people who eat fish, and the watershed ecosystem. EPA expects work will wrap up by mid-November.

Toxic Chemicals Threaten Health, Environment



A worker in protective gear tests asbestos at the site.

In 2019, at the request of the Washington Department of Ecology, EPA conducted field sampling at the site. We found very high levels of a number of hazardous substances, including cancer-causing PCBs, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), and asbestos-containing materials. The site is actively releasing PCBs through an underground stormwater system to Deadman Creek. Water and sediment in the site's two settling ponds greatly exceed state water quality and sediment standards for PCBs. These ponds are full, threatening a larger release of toxic PCBs to the watershed.

What to Expect During Cleanup

The first phase will remove contaminated source material from the 170-acre developed portion of the site, which includes many large, deteriorating structures and waste piles. The second phase will remove contaminated water and sediment from settling ponds on a 400-acre undeveloped part of the site, north of the former smelter facility. Work will begin on or around July 27 and is expected to be completed by mid-November. The cleanup will include removal of:

- Highly contaminated building siding.
- Siding material that has sloughed off onto the ground.
- Pipe insulation containing friable asbestos (capable of being inhaled).
- Piles of hazardous waste material.
- Contaminated water and sediment from the settling ponds.



EPA will remove piles of hazardous waste material, like this green coke, during the cleanup.

Health and Safety are Priorities

As we continue to adjust to the evolving risks posed by the Coronavirus, EPA is taking the necessary steps to ensure our cleanup activities prioritize the health and safety of EPA staff, contractors, partner agencies, and the communities we serve, first and foremost. EPA has carefully evaluated its field operations and logistical plans for the Former Kaiser Smelter Site removal action, to help prevent transmission of the Coronavirus. This planning, evaluated alongside continued guidance from the State of Washington and Spokane County Health District, will guide final decisions about starting and continuing on-site activities.



A worker samples coal tar pitch, once used as part of aluminum smelting activities. Now, it is an uncontained abandoned hazardous waste.

Coordinating with Partners

The EPA team is coordinating the removal approach with the Washington Department of Ecology’s Eastern Region and the Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency. EPA is establishing a plan with Ecology for monitoring, and operations and maintenance following this removal action. EPA is coordinating with the Spokane, Kalispel, and Coeur d’Alene Tribes about the project.

Work hours will be 7 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Crews will wet down work areas to control dust and conduct air monitoring to make sure these controls are effective. Storm water control measures such as storm drain plugs, straw wattles, and filter fabric will be used to prevent the release of sediment and contaminants through storm water during rain events. EPA project managers do not anticipate that this project will significantly impact local traffic.



Crews will remove highly contaminated siding (see inset) from a number of on-site buildings.

Learn About Site Contaminants

Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs):

https://www.cdc.gov/biomonitoring/PAHs_FactSheet.html

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs):

<https://www.epa.gov/pcbs>

Asbestos:

<https://www.epa.gov/asbestos>

Want to be on our Mailing List?

To be included on our project mailing list, please email Debra Sherbina at sherbina.debra@epa.gov.

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 TDD or TTY users, please call 800-877-8339 and give the operator Debra's phone number.



Taking a water sample from the upper pond.



Former Kaiser Smelter Site Time-Critical Removal

Look Inside for

- *Toxic Chemicals Threaten Health, Environment*
- *What to Expect During Cleanup*
- *Coordinating with Partners*