

My Way Trading Warehouse Fire

Frequently Asked Questions

Current as of 4/17/2023

Richmond Community Helpline: 765-973-9300

Website: www.richmondindiana.gov/news/warehouse-fire-information

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Evacuation Order & Returning Home

- **Has the evacuation order been lifted?**
Evacuation and shelter-in-place orders were lifted by local officials at 4 p.m. on Sunday, April 16, 2023.
- **Are schools, businesses, and medical offices still closed?**
School officials continue to be apprised of the situation and are making individual decisions on whether they will operate under normal or altered schedules. If you are concerned about business or doctor office hours, please call ahead to the location to ensure they are open. EPA prioritized debris collection at schools, daycares and city parks in Indiana and Ohio.
- **How do we protect our pets?**
 - Keep cats indoors in debris-impacted areas.
 - Dogs should be kept on a leash when outside in debris-impacted areas.
 - Do not let pets drink water from puddles, or drink water or eat food that was outside during the incident.
 - If dogs or cats get ash on their paws or bodies, wash it off promptly.
 - If pet toys were outside, wash them before use.

The Warehouse Fire & Incident Response

- **Where and how did the fire start?**
The cause of the fire is unknown and likely will not be known for weeks or months. The State Fire Marshal's Office is assisting with the investigation.

- **How long will the investigation take? When will we know definitive answers?**

The investigation surrounding the fire may take several weeks, or even months, as it is a difficult process. Several agencies will continue to be involved, and it is very important for those agencies to take their time to ensure objectivity.

- **Is the fire out?**

The fire is considered contained and 99% extinguished. While there continues to be a small, smoldering area called a “hot spot,” the Richmond Fire Department has been able to contain it to the incident site.

- **Who is in charge of the incident?**

The Richmond Fire Department is the lead agency with assistance from multiple agencies and organizations within the county. Several state and federal partners continue to assist, including the Indiana Fire Marshal’s Office, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Indiana Department of Environmental Management, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC).

Debris Collection & Cleaning

- **What should I do if I find debris in my yard or on my property?**

Testing confirmed that some of the debris from the fire contained asbestos. EPA crews will safely remove debris from all yards and outdoor areas. Individuals who suspect debris may be on their property can call the Richmond Community Help Line to provide contact information. EPA will contact you to gather additional information and add your property to a debris collection list. To expedite the registration process, you can self-identify your property online, using separate webforms for [Indiana](#) and [Ohio](#).

Do not remove or disturb any debris. Asbestos is a hazardous substance that releases microscopic fibers into the air when disturbed. EPA is coordinating with local officials to prioritize the collection of debris at schools, daycares, city parks and residences in Indiana and Ohio.

- **Why is EPA placing flags at the properties where debris is collected?**

EPA contractors are searching for debris from the fire, flagging what they find, and removing it. The crews place flags next to any debris they find to mark their location and will remove the flags as debris are collected. As a precautionary measure, EPA will collect all debris identified at the property.

- **Why are there workers outside in white suits?**

EPA contractors are searching for debris from the fire, flagging what they find, and removing it. OSHA standards for workers state that EPA and its contractors must first evaluate the potential for worker exposure prior to downgrading protective gear. EPA received sample results, crews will wear Tyvek suits and gloves to reduce worker exposure while picking up debris.

- **How do I clean my property?**

Indoor

Free indoor cleanup kits are available at the Wayne County Health Department, 100 S. Fifth Street, Richmond. The Wayne County Health Department has provided detailed instructions on how and what to clean in your home or business. The Cleaning Instruction Sheet is available on the city of Richmond’s website: www.richmondindiana.gov/news/warehouse-fire-information. General guidance is that normal household cleaning supplies are recommended. Odors from the fire may linger but are not deemed harmful. Heating and

ventilation air filters can be replaced to reduce potential odors. Lightly wetting filters prior to disturbing can reduce generation of dust.

Outdoor

- Debris may contain asbestos, and asbestos exposure may be harmful
- EPA is offering free debris collection. To have EPA come to your home to pick up debris, please fill out the access agreement in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) in our documents section and email Rachel at linduska.rachel@epa.gov.
- EPA's debris collection procedures are designed to protect workers and the public. Crews will:
 - Inspect roofing, gutters, downspouts, outdoor furniture, playsets, swimming pools, lawns and landscaping for visible debris.
 - Wet debris prior to pick up, to reduce the potential to create asbestos in dust form.
 - Use gloves and tools when handling debris to reduce contact and contamination of hands.
 - Collect debris from swimming pool filters.
 - Place debris into plastic bags, with about a quart of water in the bottom of the bag to ensure debris stays wetted.
 - Seal debris in an inner and outer plastic bag for extra precaution pending disposal.
 - Ensure proper waste handling to prevent breaking open trash bags.
 - Wash hands and faces prior to eating, drinking and smoking, to reduce the potential for inhaling or ingesting contamination.

Health Impacts

- **What are the health impacts of inhaling smoke?**

Symptoms that may be related to breathing smoke include repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea, or lightheadedness. If you experience these symptoms, please contact your healthcare provider.

- **Should I be wearing cloth, surgical, or N95 masks in the area?**

Cloth and surgical masks do filter out larger particulate matter; however, finer particles would require an N95-type mask. Although the fire is no longer smoking, you may feel more comfortable wearing a mask until the lingering odors dissipate. If you would like a supply of masks, please visit the Wayne County Health Department, 100 S Fifth Street, Richmond. You may also call 765-973-9245.

Air Quality

- **What has air monitoring and air sampling data shown to date?**

EPA continues 24-hour air monitoring and sampling until the Richmond Fire Department declares the fire is out due to the potential for flare ups at the site. April 16 overnight air monitoring results for chemicals of concern were almost all at, or slightly higher than, non-detect. EPA posted roving air monitoring data to the [website](#) and will post final, validated air sample results when available.

- **What's the difference between air monitoring and air sampling?**

The goal of air monitoring at the fire site is to quickly detect contaminants in the air so that actions can be taken to protect the safety of the first responders. Air monitoring uses electronic devices to measure concentrations of contaminants. These devices can be set up quickly and collect real-time air data. These data are used to guide actions in the field by indicating the location of the chemicals in the air which may be of concern. Stationary (not

moving) and mobile (moving or roving) air monitors provide continuous real-time data of air contamination to inform when concentrations rise above thresholds.

Air sampling involves collection of air for laboratory analysis. The purpose of air sampling is to measure how much of a specific contaminant is present in the air over a period of time. For this response, samples are collected over 24-hours and are submitted to a laboratory for analysis.

Water Quality

- **Is the drinking water supply safe?**

Those hooked up to municipal water receive their water from Indiana American Water, which has been closely monitoring drinking water. They report no unusual readings, nor any concerning sample results.

- **Can people and/or animals safely be in contact with downstream surface water, such as the Whitewater River?**

The Richmond Sanitary District and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management have collected water samples from the river and its tributaries. While some sample results, such as ammonia, dissolved oxygen levels, pH, and chemical oxygen demand have come back within normal levels, the sanitary district is still waiting for sample results for volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, semi-volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals. This data will be released as it is received, and at that point, local health officials will determine if the water is safe to swim in. The river and its tributaries will continue to be monitored even after the fire is out. There have been no reports of fish kills or disturbances to wildlife.

- **Was plastic found in the water?**

Plastic from the fire was deposited in the river, found close to the outfall from storm drains near the fire. EPA quickly installed barriers to isolate the debris while IDEM and the sanitary district took measures to prevent additional plastic from coming in through the outfall. Sanitary district staff cleaned streets, screened drains at the site of the fire, and continue to collect plastic in and around the river.

Additional Resources

- **What if I have additional questions or concerns? Who can I call?**

A 24-hour Community Help Line is available, and will remain available, for anyone that has additional questions or concerns. Please call 765-973-9300 to speak with someone.

- **Are there additional resources available?**

City of Richmond: www.richmondindiana.gov/news/warehouse-fire-information

Wayne County Emergency Management Agency: <https://www.co.wayne.in.us/web/dept/ema/index.php>

Indiana Department of Homeland Security Fire Marshal Office:

Email: pio@dhs.in.gov

Phone: 463-202-4063

Environmental Protection Agency: response.epa.gov/MyWayTradingWarehouse