

**United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region VII
POLLUTION REPORT**

Date: Friday, September 5, 2003

From: Dan Garvey, Eric Nold

Subject: Omaha Lead

Greater Omaha Area, Council Bluffs, Carter Lake, Greater Omaha Area, NE

Latitude: 41.1997000

Longitude: -95.9303000

POLREP No.:	8	Site #:	NESFNO703481
Reporting Period:		D.O. #:	0006
Start Date:	8/19/2002	Response Authority:	CERCLA
Mob Date:	8/19/2003	Response Type:	Time-Critical
Demob Date:		NPL Status:	NPL
Completion Date:		Incident Category:	Removal Action
CERCLIS ID #:	NESFN0703481	Contract #	
RCRIS ID #:			

Site Description

The Omaha Lead Site is located in the Omaha metropolitan area including Council Bluffs, and Carter Lake, Iowa. Specific boundaries of the site have not yet been defined because the sampling activities for the entire area of investigation are not complete.

Several businesses and manufacturing companies used or processed lead at their facilities in the Omaha metropolitan area. ASARCO Incorporated (ASARCO) operated a lead refinery at 500 Douglas St. in Omaha for over 100 years beginning in the 1870s. The operation of the refinery ceased in 1997. As a routine part of the refinery operation, lead particles were emitted into the atmosphere at the refinery. In addition, the Gould Inc. lead battery recycling plant located at 555 Farnam Street in Omaha was a secondary smelter of lead from discarded lead batteries, closing in 1982. The blast furnace used to smelt the lead at the Gould plant emitted lead particles into the air from that smelter.

In the fall of 1996, the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) began an assessment of 179 homes located in eastern Omaha. The goal of the assessment was to identify all sources of lead poisoning in each residence. DCHD collected outdoor soil samples from 84 of the 179 residences. Twenty of the 84 exceeded the 400 mg/kg screening level for lead.

In the fall of 1998, DCHD began a more thorough assessment of soil lead contamination at selected residences in east Omaha. Several more residential yards were found to be lead contaminated.

DCHD performed air monitoring of the ambient air quality around the ASARCO lead refinery. In 1984 an air monitor was placed along Abbott Drive immediately north of ASARCO. In the 37 quarters of monitoring conducted at this location between 1984 and 1996, the 1.5 g/m3 air standard for lead was exceeded 19 times. A second air monitoring station was placed along the Missouri River front immediately south of ASARCO in 1990. The standard was exceeded 17 of the 23 quarters that monitoring was conducted at that station. In 1995, a third monitor was placed immediately northwest of ASARCO. This monitor exceeded the standard in all five quarters that monitoring was conducted at this location.

In May 1998, Mr. Frank Brown, President of the Omaha City Council, sent a letter to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting the assistance of EPA in addressing problems with lead contamination in the Omaha area. EPA initiated a process to investigate the lead contamination using CERCLA authority.

EPA began sampling soil from child care facilities and selected residential properties in March 1999. Seventy-eight of the 364 licensed child care facilities tested have one or more non-foundation results greater than 400 mg/kg with a high concentration of 4,670 mg/kg. The locations of the 364 child care facilities are widely scattered over the Omaha metropolitan area (including Carter Lake, and Council Bluffs, Iowa). There are additional child care facilities that have not been sampled by the EPA. Efforts to sample these child care facilities are ongoing. Two hundred eighty-two residences with EBL were tested

resulting in 134 yards exceeding 400 mg/kg. Sampling at residences with EBL are ongoing. Five hundred sixty-nine of the first 1,422 private residences tested have one or more non-foundation soil analytical results greater than 400 mg/kg lead. The EPA is continuing to sample additional residential properties.

Current Activities

September 2-6, 2003

The primary activity performed throughout the week was the continued removal of lead contaminated soils from day care facilities and residential properties. Work crews excavated and backfilled 2 day cares and 2 residences throughout the week.

Other EPA contractor personnel (START) scheduled appointments with the various day cares and EBL properties, videotaped and photographed the properties prior to the planned excavations. Also, access agreements were presented to each property owner and were signed. Air sampling using personal air monitors and a data RAM were collected to ensure that particulates in ambient air were not exceeding permissible levels.

Planned Removal Actions

Continued excavation is planned for the remainder of the 36 day care facilities and EBL properties.

Once the sod is applied to each property, EPA will water the completed properties for a 30 day period. At that time, EPA is asking each property owner to care for their individual yards beyond the 30 day time period.

Next Steps

There are thousands of properties in the area that are currently being screened by an EPA contractor. A certain percentage of the properties that are above the stated action levels will fall into time critical removal categories. These categories include residences with children showing elevated blood-lead levels and residences with lead contamination greater than 2500 ppm.

Continued cooperation with the Omaha Public Works Department is on-going in order to use the Missouri River Treatment Facility at a significant cost savings to the Federal Government during the tenure of this removal action.

Key Issues

During this phase of the project the key issues continue to be excavation of contaminated soil, replacement with backfill and collection of access agreements and documentation of properties.

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