CITY OF NEW ORLEANS
ROADWORK
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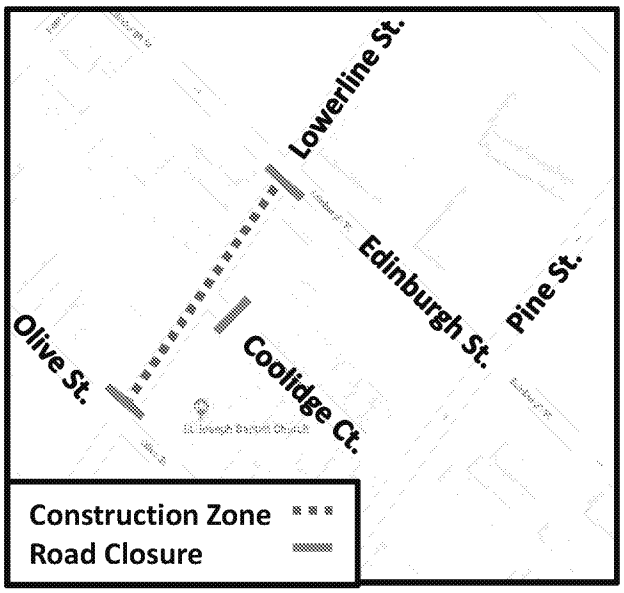
Construction Notice
Lowerline Street (Olive to Edinburgh)
May 18, 2019

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) and the City of New Orleans will begin removing radiation contaminated soil found in the 3400 block of Lowerline Street near the intersection of Lowerline and Coolidge streets on Tuesday, May 28, 2019. The origin of the material is unknown and while it has been present for some time, it is being removed out of an abundance of caution.

What to Expect: The excavation, removal and disposal operations will require temporary closure of Lowerline St. between Olive and Edinburgh streets and Coolidge Ct. between Lowerline and Pine streets. Crew members will wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including disposable coveralls and gloves during operations.



All excavated material and soil will be placed in roll off bins for safe removal from the area. Representatives from EPA, LDEQ and the City will be onsite throughout operations to answer questions and be sure that any possible exposure is below the established limits.

Traffic flow will be restricted by barricades and plastic sheeting may be used to protect the ground around the excavation. Metal and silt fencing will also prevent access to the excavation site and any possible runoff.

Residents should plan to park on side streets during the excavation work. Weather permitting, work will begin on Tuesday, May 28 and will take approximately two weeks to complete. Crews will be permitted to work from 7 a.m. to sunset.

Questions may be directed to 504.657.9169 or roadwork@nola.gov.

Thank you for your patience.

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Frequently Asked Questions

How did U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) get involved?
U.S. EPA used its authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, and Compensation, Liability Act (CERCLA). CERCLA, also known as "Superfund," is a law designed to help cleanup abandoned waste facilities.

How do I detect radiation?
You cannot sense radiation. Radiation can only be detected using specialized instruments. Emergency responders are skilled in using these instruments.

What happens when I am exposed to radiation?
You may not experience any health effects. A very large dose of radiation may cause skin burns, nausea and vomiting. If you have these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

What are common sources of radiation?
Low levels of radiation come from a number of sources. These include natural background. They also include sources such as medical x-rays.

What are the reasonable steps to take in an emergency?
Follow safety instructions from public officials. Minimize the time you spend in areas with elevated radiation levels. Avoid areas where radiation levels are elevated.

What happens when I am exposed to radiation?
You may not experience any health effects. A very large dose of radiation may cause skin burns, nausea and vomiting. If you have these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.

How can I tell if I have been exposed?
Skin burns, nausea and vomiting can result from large doses of radiation. Seek medical attention immediately if you have these symptoms. If you think you have been contaminated, shower and change into clean clothes. Place contaminate clothing in a plastic bag and seal it. Place the bag as far away as possible form humans and animals. Bagged clothing can be examined later to determine if you were contaminated.

What should I do if I am asked to shelter-in-place?
Shelter in place means get indoors as soon as possible. Close all exterior vents and windows. If needed, use air-conditioning (and heat), preferably in recirculation mode.

What are you doing to protect public health and the environment?
Our primary concern is the health and safety of the public. We are working closely with local, state and federal partners to remove the contamination and dispose of it off site to a facility that is approved to accept the contaminated soil.

How can Radium-226 and radiation affect my health?

Everyone is exposed to low levels of radium in nature. Eating or inhaling higher levels of radium over a long period can lead to health problems. Direct exposure to radiation from the breakdown of radium-226 can damage our cells. Over time, cell damage can lead to specific types of cancer.

There is no direct exposure to radium since it has not been ingested and inhaled. Exposure to high levels of radium may increase your risk of developing bone, liver, breast and some blood cancers, anemia (a problem with the blood), fractured teeth and cavities, and cataracts in the eyes. Some of these health problems may take years to develop.

How should dust contamination be controlled during remediation work?
EPA has determined the best engineering controls are water and moderation. Dust will be addressed with water, but if readings on the perimeter of the excavation site show a reading of higher than 10 micro R per hour a containment tent may be considered. At this time EPA does not anticipate a containment tent as a necessary precaution. EPA will have onsite monitors at the perimeter of the roadway and also, in the excavation site(s). Air sampling units will also be in place during operations. Pumps pull air samples throughout excavation to confirm that operations are safe. The air monitors provide results within minutes of air samples.