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Sent: 6/1/2017 2:29:16 PM
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Subject: USS Lead - Press

East Chicago press clips
US EPA Region 5 – prepared by the Office of Public Affairs
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US News	**EPA steps up communications on East Chicago lead crisis**
NWI Times	**EPA to clean West Calumet to residential standards**
Post Tribune	**EPA promises better communication with East Chicago residents**
Lakeshore Public Radio	**Indiana To Begin Testing For Lead In Public School Water**

https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/indiana/articles/2017-05-31/epa-steps-up-communications-on-east-chicago-lead-crisis

EPA steps up communications on East Chicago lead crisis

May 31, 2017 at 5:45 pm | The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Environmental Protection Agency is stepping up outreach efforts in East Chicago to help address resident concerns about the ongoing cleanup of lead contamination.

The federal agency said Wednesday that it will designate a "community involvement coordinator" who will be a point of contact for local residents. Officials also will establish a hotline, track inquiries and hold monthly meetings to provide updates.

The EPA also plans to have a presence at Carrie Gosch Elementary School to make it easier for parents to make inquiries.

Lead contamination poses a serious health risk in areas surrounding the former USS lead facility in East Chicago. The site has been designated one of the worst contaminated areas in the country since 2009.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt is pledging to make the cleanup a priority.

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/epa-to-clean-west-calumet-to-residential-standards/article_192fee60-3bf2-5d8f-a39f-0e25b5eb2f84.html

EPA to clean West Calumet to residential standards

- Sarah Reese sarah.reese@nwi.com, 219-933-3351

- May 31, 2017 Updated 9 hrs ago EPA contractors clean their boots in summer 2016 after excavating contaminated soil at a home in East Chicago's East Calumet neighborhood.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said it plans to clean up the West Calumet Housing Complex property to residential standards.

The federal agency confirmed the decision Tuesday after being asked last week to respond to a statement issued by East Chicago Mayor Anthony Copeland, who said he hand delivered a letter to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in April "outlining the city's desire to have that property remediated to residential standards."

"I and my administration have been very clear with the EPA that once demolition is complete, the property needs to be remediated to a residential standard," Copeland said in the statement. "Once the remediation is complete, the city will work with residents, businesses and other stakeholders to determine the future use of the remediated area."

EPA said Tuesday it is drafting a response to Copeland's April 19 letter to Pruitt. EPA Region 5 Acting Administrator Robert Kaplan asked Copeland in a March 22 letter to "provide EPA in writing a description of the anticipated future land use for the WCHC property."

The city and the East Chicago Housing Authority last summer ordered more than 1,000 residents at the complex to relocate after learning EPA had found lead concentrations of up to 45,000 parts per million in the top 6 inches of soil there. At one property, lead levels of more than 91,000 ppm were found at a depth of 18 to 24 inches.

EPA's remedial action levels for lead at the USS Lead Superfund site are 400 ppm for residential sites and 800 ppm for industrial or commercial properties, according to a 2012 record of decision. The site's remedial action level for arsenic is 26 ppm for all properties.

The West Calumet Housing Complex and former Carrie Gosch Elementary School, which was closed to students because of contamination concerns, comprise residential cleanup zone 1 of the Superfund site.

Residents living in about 1,000 properties in Calumet and East Calumet — dubbed zones 2 and 3 — have not been told to move. EPA resumed excavation of contaminated soil in zones 2 and 3 this spring.

EPA shelved its plans for remediation in zone 1 last summer, after the East Chicago Housing Authority submitted a demolition application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The federal agency subsequently began work on an updated feasibility study, which will lay out several alternatives for cleaning up the site. EPA eventually will select a cleanup plan from among alternatives presented in the study.

"For zone 1, now that a future use has been determined by the city, the feasibility study addendum can move forward. Alternatives will be developed to remediate the site to residential standards," EPA said.

In his April 19 letter to Pruitt, Copeland listed restoring public trust in water quality as his No. 1 concern.

EPA found elevated lead levels at 18 homes last year and later said the data likely indicated a systemwide issue. The city and state have been testing water, and the East Chicago Water Board recently approved a plan to replace lead and galvanized steel water lines in the Superfund area.

Residents have said the Indiana Department of Environmental Management must be transparent about testing data and methods and have pushed for water filters to be distributed to all residents, not just those in zones 2 and 3 of the Superfund site.

http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/news/ct-ptb-east-chicago-epa-commmunication-st-0601-20170531-story.html

EPA promises better communication with East Chicago residents

Craig Lyons Post-Tribune

May 31, 2017

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is instituting new programs to better communicate with residents of the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site in East Chicago as cleanup of the lead and arsenic contamination continues.

The EPA's move to improve its communication with residents of the Calumet neighborhood came out of a meeting Administrator Scott Pruitt had with those living at the Superfund site and other community advocates who voiced frustration at the difficulty people have had getting information about their properties and the ongoing clean up.

"When I met with East Chicago residents, I heard their issues first hand and vowed to help correct these problems," said Pruitt, in a statement. "I am making it a priority to ensure contaminated sites get cleaned up. We will take a more hands-on approach to ensure proper oversight and attention to the Superfund program at the highest levels of the agency."

Resident Maritza Lopez, a leader of the East Chicago Calumet Coalition and We the People of East Chicago, said she looks forward to seeing how the EPA's plan will work as the residents have asked for improved communication for a long time.
"It's great they are going to implement this," Lopez said, but the plans are just on paper now and she's interested to see how it will work on the ground.
The EPA's communications with residents must consider the neighborhood's population, Lopez said, and recognize the number of people who speak Spanish and others who have trouble understanding the material the agency sends out.
"I'm hoping that's part of the implementation," Lopez said. "They have to understand the demographics."
The new initiatives the EPA is planning are:

- Have a community involvement coordinator who will be the direct point of contact for residents.
- Host monthly meetings to provide updates and answer questions.
- Track residents' inquiries in a database to see timely responses are provided.
- Maintain presence at the Carrie Gosch Elementary School so residents can talk to staff.
- Regularly update the U.S.S. Lead Superfund site web page.
- Publicize a hotline for residents.
- Regularly meet with city, state and federal officials to provide updates. "As Administrator Pruitt highlighted during his visit to East Chicago last month, collaboration between the EPA, the State and local East Chicago leaders is critical to addressing past issues on this Superfund site," said Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, in a statement. "I thank the administrator for taking these important steps and for demonstrating his continued commitment to Hoosiers in Northwest Indiana."

The EPA's announcement of new communication efforts comes after attorneys continue to push a federal court to give residents a say in legal proceedings related to clean up plans at the site.
Two weeks ago, residents objected to Magistrate Judge Paul Cherry's denial of their petition to intervene on court proceedings between the U.S. Department of Justice, EPA and parties responsible for the contamination. Cherry wrote in his order that the residents' request was not timely in relation to the court proceedings.
Attorneys for the residents said the judge's perspective of timeliness did not account for the decades it took the EPA to step in and investigate and clean up the contamination in the Calumet neighborhood.
"The opinion raises an important question: When a community has been subject to decades worth of pollution and delay, how quickly should the community be required to act to enforce its legal rights," wrote David Chizewer and Emily Gilman, of Goldberg Kohn, Nancy Loeb and Debbie Chizewer of Northwestern's Environmental Advocacy Clinic, and Mark Templeton of the University of Chicago Law School Abrams Environmental Law Clinic, in the residents' objection.
The DOJ and judge have yet to respond to the residents' objection.

http://lakeshorepublicradio.org/post/indiana-begin-testing-lead-public-school-water

Indiana To Begin Testing For Lead In Public School Water
By Peter Balonon-Rosen • 19 hours ago

State officials plan to investigate the drinking water of more than 700 Indiana public schools for lead contamination this summer. Officials will travel the state to collect samples from drinking fountains, sinks, and other fixtures that provide drinking water across school campuses.

Water testing will be led by the environmental arm of the Indiana Finance Authority, which oversees state funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

“Lead contamination is most dangerous in children,” says Jim McGoff, Indiana Finance Authority’s chief operating officer and director of environmental programs. “We thought that offering public schools the opportunity to assure that their drinking fountains were safe would be the appropriate place to start.”

The IFA recently awarded a $1.63 million grant to the Indiana Geological Survey, a state agency in charge of spreading information about Indiana's energy, mineral and water resources. The money will be used to aid water testing in schools.

While IFA has planned to investigate school water for months, the timing of their investigation follows low- and high-profile reports of lead contamination in Indiana.

Last year, in East Chicago, Indiana, federal authorities found arsenic and lead levels in soil more than 100 times the legal limit. The poisoned soil sat under an affordable housing development and bordered an elementary school. Gov. Eric Holcomb declared the residential neighborhood a disaster emergency.

In an unrelated case, federal authorities also found lead in East Chicago's tap water.

In November 2015, tests ordered by a Kokomo, Indiana, school district found elevated lead levels in drinking water.

Across the nation, schools and daycares have grappled with how to protect children from contaminated water. According to data from the Environmental Protection Agency, about 350 schools and day care centers failed lead tests almost 500 times from 2012 through 2015.s

As USA Today reports, some Indiana schools, citing safety concerns, took measures to address lead in water in 2016.

"The Indiana School for the Deaf in Indianapolis sampled its water this year "out of an abundance of caution" and found two water fountains with high levels: one initially testing at 130 ppb and the other at 519 ppb. Both were taken out of service with plans to replace them."

As reports of lead contamination in schools becomes increasingly common, the National Association of State Boards of Education plans to develop a national protocol to help schools respond.

State officials plan to compare this summer's water school measurements against EPA lead action levels, identify contaminated water fixtures and replace them by the fall.

Sincerely,

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