United States Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Takes Action to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Soil

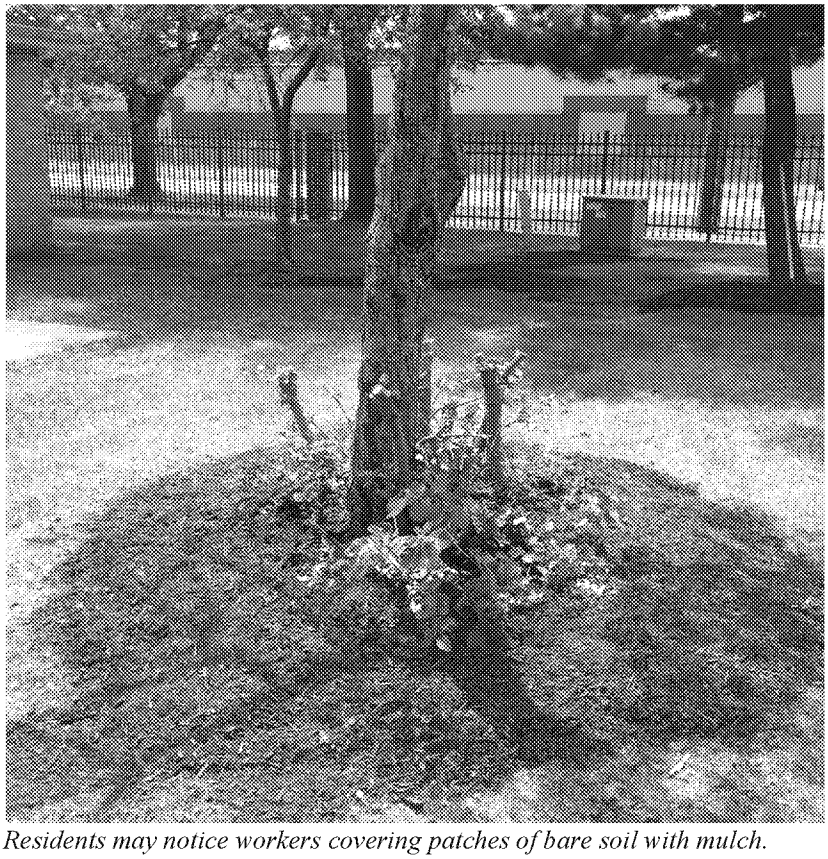
West Calumet Housing Complex

East Chicago, Indiana July 2016

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is taking action to protect residents from lead-contaminated soil in the West Calumet Housing Complex in East Chicago, Ind. EPA responders will manage potential exposure to lead by covering patches of bare dirt at the complex with mulch. Earlier this month, they spread mulch at a local playground. The mulch will temporarily provide a barrier until EPA can dig up and remove the contaminated soil. Residents should avoid disturbing the mulch and should not allow children to dig in the mulch.

During the response action this month, EPA installed raised plastic edging with a shredded recycled brown rubber mulch at the playground in Goodman Park. The mulch is certified for use at playgrounds. Next, EPA will cover bare dirt in residential yards with triple-shredded, hardwood mulch.

These actions are part of a larger effort to clean up the USS Lead Superfund site.



Residents may notice workers covering patches of bare soil with mulch.

EPA covered patches of bare-soil in the playground area at Goodman Park with mulch.

For more information

For questions, comments or for more information contact these EPA team members:

Brad Benning
On-Scene Coordinator
312-353-7613
benning.bradley@epa.gov

Michael Berkoff
Remedial Project Manager
312-353-8983
berkoff.michael@epa.gov

Janet Pope
Community Involvement Coordinator
312-353-0628
pope.janet@epa.gov

EPA Region 5 toll-free:
800-621-8431, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., weekdays

For questions or concerns about lead health contact:

Mark Johnson, Ph.D.
Toxicologist
ATSDR-R5
312-886-0840
mdjohnson@cdc.gov

Motria Caudill
Environmental Health Scientist
ATSDR-R5
312-886-0267
mcaudill@cdc.gov

To ensure the health and safety of children, the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, or ATSDR, advises parents to prevent children from playing in dirt or mulch, to wash their children's toys regularly and to wash children's hands after they play outside. All residents should remove shoes before walking into their homes. ATSDR officials also recommend residents in the West Calumet Housing Complex not disturb the mulch or dig or garden in their yards.

EPA and ATSDR staff have been going door-to-door providing information to residents about steps they can take to reduce exposure to lead contamination. EPA is working closely with the city of East Chicago and the East Chicago Public Housing Authority.

West Calumet residents may have their children's blood lead levels tested by calling the East Chicago Health Department at 219-391-8467.

To learn about preventing childhood exposure to lead, visit http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/parents.htm.

More information about the history of the USS Lead Superfund site is available at http://www.epa.gov/superfund/ussmelter-lead-refinery.

A small batch of shredded rubber mulch installed over bare dirt around a playground area at Goodman Park and around West Calumet housing complex.