



## Answers to Residents' Questions About Sampling in Yards by The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Iron King Mine / Humboldt Smelter Superfund Site

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Please read these answers in conjunction with the Fact Sheet entitled  
***EPA TO CONDUCT FIELD WORK TO COMPLETE CLEANUP INVESTIGATION;  
NEW INFORMATION ABOUT RESIDENTIAL BACKGROUND AND SOILS***

### **Why is EPA asking for access to my property?**

EPA is seeking to collect samples from your property to allow us to ensure that your and your community's long-term health is protected. We are investigating whether arsenic and lead contamination from the former Humboldt Smelter or former Iron King Mine operations may have come into yards over the many decades since 1900. We need to evaluate whether contamination in yards poses an elevated health risk, and whether and where cleanup actions may be warranted. Arsenic and lead may have blown into yards in tailings or historical stack emissions; or entered the yard when fill material was brought in over the years.

### **Has EPA found levels of arsenic and lead in other yards high enough to pose a health risk?**

Yes, in some yards – but only in scattered locations. EPA has performed cleanup actions at about 15 of these properties. We are now assessing where additional cleanup may be needed. However, a majority of homes do not have lead or arsenic levels of concern and it is unlikely a cleanup will be necessary.

### **Why my property? What about other properties?**

Your property is one of hundreds of properties EPA is sampling that lie within an area where contaminants from the site could potentially be found. In 2009/2010, EPA sampled about 200 yards. In 2011/2012, we performed an extensive investigation of naturally-occurring ("background") levels of arsenic and lead in the area. Now, we are collecting samples from several hundred additional yards to complete our investigation.

### **What will the sampling entail, and how long will it take?**

In most yards, EPA will scrape or scoop 10-20 samples from the top (surface) soils in your yard, depending on the yard's size. We will also take one or two samples from a small 1 foot hole that we will fill back in. The samples will be stored in baggies or jars. The levels of metals in the soils will be measured in the field with a hand-held piece of equipment called an X-Ray Fluorescence Spectrometer (called an "XRF"). Some or all of these samples may be sent off to a laboratory for analysis as well. In most cases, the sampling can be conducted within 1-2 hours.

In some yards, EPA will need to collect more samples than indicated above, from a cluster of several yards taken together. Also, in some situations we may wish to collect a sample of produce or plants. These activities may require more than a few hours to complete. Should they be necessary, we will discuss with you what we plan to do and about how many samples or other actions we will need to take in the case of your particular yard.

### **Will there be any lasting effect to the property?**

This sampling should have no lasting impact on the property. We will do all that we can to leave the property the way we found it. The amount of soil being taken is typically small. If special circumstances require that the plan described above is not applicable to your yard, we will explain and discuss it with you.

### **How will I know if a cleanup is necessary at my property?**

Under the Superfund law, EPA must follow a process to select a cleanup action under the Superfund law. This process requires a public proposal, reports, and public input. EPA will make all of this available for your review, hold public meetings, and receive public input prior to making a cleanup decision. If our sampling reveals very high levels of contamination that require urgent action, we will inform you directly and arrange for appropriate actions. If levels are of a non-urgent level but a cleanup action is still needed, or more sampling is required, we will seek direct contact with you to discuss possibilities, answer your questions, and seek your consent before performing work.

### **Can I get the results from my property?**

Upon your request, EPA will send you results of samples collected at your property when they are validated and available. EPA will also show and evaluate all residential yards in its investigation report, which will be publically available for your review. If your yard is found to pose an elevated health risk due to soils, EPA will contact you and discuss further actions with you. EPA also will hold additional public meetings to explain the results.

Please note that EPA keeps confidential your name and any personal information you may provide as a result of our sampling. The sampling results and address do become part of the public record as they serve as a basis for our decision about cleanup.

### **My property was already sampled in 2010. Why do you want to sample again?**

In certain cases, we may need to reconfirm samples collected before, or to collect samples from a different set of locations within the yard so as to adequately assess whether contaminants are present in the yard.

### **Who is actually doing the sampling? Who at EPA can I contact if I have questions?**

EPA staff, and/or a contractor of EPA, will be in the field performing the sampling. EPA contractors are required to identify themselves as contractors if you ask. In this effort, sampling assistance is being provided by contractors called SERAS and Lockheed Martin. EPA representatives will also be in the area but may not be at your particular residence when workers call on you.

If you have questions about the work, the IKHS Superfund site, contamination or health concerns, etc., you may contact EPA representatives in our regional office in San Francisco, CA:

Jeff Dhont, Remedial Project Manager  
(415) 972-3020 // [dhont.jeff@epa.gov](mailto:dhont.jeff@epa.gov)

Amanda Pease, Community Involvement Coordinator  
(415) 972-3068 // [pease.amanda@epa.gov](mailto:pease.amanda@epa.gov)

Alternately, you may leave a message at our toll-free line: 1-800-231-3075