

# ***Vashon-Maury Community Update***



## **What is the Washington State Department of Ecology doing over the next two years in response to soil contamination in the Tacoma Smelter Plume area?**

Guided by the Model Toxics Control Act, the Department of Ecology (Ecology) has identified three objectives for focusing work on the Tacoma Smelter Plume site over the next two years.

1. We are gathering information to complete the Site Hazard Assessment phase of the cleanup – that is we are collecting soil samples in King and Pierce counties to determine the extent of the arsenic and lead contamination that may have resulted from the emissions from the Tacoma smelter.
2. Second, as it will take many years to develop and implement cleanup solutions for the whole Tacoma Smelter Plume site, Ecology is identifying the need for any early cleanup actions. Our efforts are focused at reducing exposure to contaminants in areas used by children, such as schools, daycare centers, parks, campgrounds, and beaches.
3. Third, Ecology is focused on gathering sufficient credible evidence to identify the potentially liable party(s). Ecology will notify any party(s) of their potential liability, and request their participation in the investigation and cleanup of the Tacoma Smelter Plume site.

To achieve these objectives, Ecology is partnering with the local health departments – Seattle & King County, and Tacoma-Pierce County. Ecology is providing the health departments with grant monies from the Local Toxics Control Account to assist with data collection and to work with communities on health education.

### **Resource Limitations**

Through monies available in the Local Toxics Control Account, Ecology can offer remedial action grants to local governments (including public schools and parks) to lessen the effect of cleanup costs to ratepayers and taxpayers. Over the last couple of years, Ecology has successfully marketed this program such that all of the monies available for the 2001-2003 biennium (July 1, 2001, to June 30, 2003) are already allocated to 8,000 projects statewide. Unfortunately, grant funding for public entities, such as schools and parks, in the Tacoma Smelter Plume site will not likely be available until the 2003-2005 biennium. Any further appropriations are dependent on the state legislature. Ecology encourages those public entities interested in remedial action grants, to apply **now** for the 2003-2005 biennium. Information on Voluntary Cleanup assistance is available on our website at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/VCPmain.htm>.

Secondly, in July 2000 Ecology provided grant money to the Seattle & King County Public Health Department (Public Health) to complete the Site Hazard Assessment. King County is facing significant budget challenges. Basically, Public Health is having difficulties affording the grant provided by Ecology. These funding limitations have delayed completion of many of the site hazard assessment tasks. Ecology has extended the grant through December 2001 (the end of the County's budget cycle), and both agencies are creatively negotiating ways to reduce the County's overhead. We will update you through the December newsletter as to how this issue is resolved. Alternatives are planned, but our hope is to retain the County's services.



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Dear Parents and Students of Vashon Island:

I have recently had an opportunity to meet with representatives from the Department of Ecology, the Department of Health, and the Vashon ALRC group regarding levels of arsenic, lead and cadmium on Vashon Island. Each meeting has been very informative to me. As a school district, we must work cooperatively with everyone involved, and I appreciate the time and willingness of these three groups to meet with me.

Our soils have been tested for levels of arsenic and lead. Thankfully, our schools are at levels that are low enough that they do not pose a significant short-term health risk. While the levels do not pose an immediate health problem, some areas fall within the Washington State cleanup standards. From the school district’s standpoint, there are two levels of cleanup efforts that we will undertake in the very near future.

The first effort deals directly with children’s behaviors. I will ask that parents and teachers take an active role in this process. In simple terms, children that are playing in and eating soils that may be contaminated are more vulnerable at the elementary age level. Their blood brain barrier increases as their weight and nutritional plan increases. The types of behaviors that are most concerning, especially at the elementary level, are those that encourage pathways of soil to our kids and may adversely affect them:

- 1. Mining the clay, which means students digging in the clay, getting it on their hands, and forming it into shapes – In this regard, without intense soap and water, hands do not get clean.
2. Digging in or bunker building – There are a number of students that dig down and hide behind mounds of dirt.
3. Hand washing – The most effective means of getting the soil off one’s hands is with soap and water. Many times for convenience sake, students use the gels.

The second effort deals with remediation. Having met with these different groups, I have gathered a total of nine different ways that are valid interim actions. I must ensure that any remediation that takes place follows the MTCA (Model Toxic Control Act) standards, which are those set by the government. We have five areas on which we specifically focus, four of which are on the Chautauqua/McMurray campus. The fifth area is the vegetable and flower garden that the Horticulture class has so beautifully grown on the administration office site. That garden will be our first remediation project.

I have set up meetings with the building principals to go over the various remediation ideas. Once we have decided on one approach, I will then begin looking into costs. At this time, there are no funds or grants available for which we can apply for this effort. Therefore, projects will be funded entirely from the school district’s General Fund.

I see this as a two-tiered process where we are currently working with interim action levels to prevent further exposure. Please note that to date, we are not aware of any students affected by exposure. In the long-term, cleanup will be underway in all areas of the Island with other groups. Again, my focus will be on the school district’s property and the students who attend our schools. Health and safety is our number one priority for staff and students.

If you have any questions about our plan of action or would like to provide me with further information, please do not hesitate to call me at 463-6000. Again, I would like to thank the DOE, DOH and ALRC for partnering with the school district, communicating effectively and informing me on this very important issue.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marguerite (Mimi) Walker Superintendent

MW/cr

## Summarizing Why Interim Action Trigger Levels Are Set

*For complete information on why and how Interim Action trigger levels are set, see our website at [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma\\_smelter/ts\\_hp.htm](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma_smelter/ts_hp.htm).*

- ◆ Interim actions are taken to ensure people's safety or to protect the environment while we investigate need for further action.
- ◆ Tacoma Smelter Plume technical staff began research and discussion on adopting Interim Action trigger levels in August 2000.
- ◆ This site is extraordinarily large, extends over hundreds of square miles, and likely involves hundreds of child use areas with lead and arsenic contamination above state cleanup levels.
- ◆ We must prioritize cleanup of child use areas by the amount and type of contamination; the worst sites are cleaned up first.
- ◆ See detailed Question and Answer document on how the trigger levels were set for schools, day-care centers, parks, and camps. The only reason for the difference in levels is the time children spend in that location. Children are assumed to spend less time at parks and camps, than at schools and daycares. You can view details at: [http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma\\_smelter/ts\\_q\\_and\\_a.pdf](http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/tacoma_smelter/ts_q_and_a.pdf), or view the document at the Vashon Library in the Tacoma Smelter Plume file.
- ◆ The trigger levels are set because we cannot clean up all sites identified at once, or in the near future. Funds and resources limit our ability to take action. Details of both a long-term and short-term approach to supporting sub-sites within the larger Tacoma Smelter Plume area will be published in our December newsletter.
- ◆ Trigger levels are based on scientific, conservative risk assessment calculations (available for public review at the VMI library.)
- ◆ The interim action trigger levels are the lead and arsenic levels above which we are uncomfortable relying solely on community protection measures for the entire community.
- ◆ Above the Interim Action trigger levels we seek funds to take early cleanup action, with primary emphasis on approaching the Potentially Liable Party.

## Summary of Activities

Our objectives for the Tacoma Smelter Plume project remain the same, with a focus on child use areas, and determining location of soil contamination. At present we believe the areas of highest contamination are the south end of Vashon-Maury Island, coastal King County, and an area in Pierce County extending out from the Ruston Superfund site. Ecology continues to work with you, as well as public agencies, as we seek funding and discover what soil contamination means to Islanders. We will continue to provide referrals to experts in areas related to soil contamination, and to inter-related environmental concerns.

We thank all of you for your patience with what promises to be a long process. When we have information we will share it quickly, and when the information is slow in being developed we will let you know that there have been delays.

In addition, Ecology has new information about the statewide arsenic and lead contamination on the east-side of the state. While elevated levels of arsenic and lead were known to exist in orchard lands for several years, landowner concern has risen, combined with concern about high lead levels in the blood of migrant worker children. Recently, orchard growers have realized the extent to which the lead arsenate contamination has affected their ability to grow young trees. There are many complications to the orchard land issues. Ecology is putting together a multi-agency task force to define issues that are specific to Tacoma Smelter Plume, the Everett site, and Eastside contamination. Again, we will notify you of these developments as they evolve.

We are in frequent contact with the Arsenic and Lead Remediation Committee. Your input is important to us. If you have questions or comments, please contact Molly Gibbs, Ecology's Public Involvement Coordinator, at (360) 407-6179 or by email at [mgib461@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:mgib461@ecy.wa.gov).

### ***Dust Control on Vashon-Maury Island***

*Several Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) Schools and Community Protection Measures Schools and Community Protection Measures customers have recently asked, "In view of lead and arsenic issues on Vashon and Maury Island, does DDES place and enforce permit conditions pertaining to dust control?" DDES activated such a practice in late June 2001. For island construction sites, DDES prioritizes KCC 16.82.100b.2 and 16.82.060d3 as follows:*

The permit holder shall provide effective dust control measures during construction. Dust, dirt, and airborne solids from any source shall not be emitted in quantities as to adversely affect adjacent property. Reasonable precautions to minimize dust emissions include, but are not limited to:

1. The use of control equipment, enclosures, and wet or chemical (as approved by DDES) suppression techniques, as practical, and curtailment of construction during high winds;
2. Surfacing roadways, driveways and parking areas with gravel, asphalt, or concrete;
3. Treating construction sites with water or chemical (as approved by DDES) stabilizers, constructing pavement or rip rap exit aprons, and cleaning vehicle undercarriages before they exit to prevent the track-out of mud or dirt into roadways;
4. Covering or wetting truck loads or allowing adequate freeboard to prevent the escape of dust-bearing materials; and
5. Complete permanent site stabilization of all disturbed areas prior to final inspection approval.

For additional information, please contact **Mike Dykeman, Building Inspections Supervisor at (206) 296-6761.**