

Elevated Arsenic or Lead in Soil

Arsenic 20-100 ppm or lead 250-500 ppm, does not qualify for soil removal

Tacoma Smelter Plume

December 2019

Your yard has elevated levels of arsenic or lead in the soil but **does not qualify** for the state-funded soil removal program. This list of frequently asked questions explains how to understand your sampling results, the health risks of arsenic and lead and how to protect your family.

Q: What do my sampling results mean?

A: The arsenic and lead levels in your yard are below the criteria for the state-funded soil removal program. However, your yard has elevated arsenic or lead, above the cleanup level, 20 ppm arsenic or 250 ppm lead. At the levels in your yard, we strongly recommend healthy actions to lower your exposure to soils (see below).

Q: Am I required to remove soils from my own yard?

A: No, Ecology will not require you to clean up contaminated soils found in your yard.

Q: Should I clean up my own soil? Will Ecology reimburse me for cleanup?

A: We don't recommend doing your own soil cleanup unless you are planning a building project or major landscaping that involves moving soils. We cannot reimburse you for any costs, but we can provide guidance. For advice on your soil moving project, contact Eva Barber at (360) 407-7094, or Eva.Barber@ecy.wa.gov.

Q: Why doesn't my yard qualify for the state-funded soil removal program?

A: Your yard does not qualify for soil removal because arsenic and lead levels are below the criteria. Ecology is offering to remove and replace soil for yards with arsenic 100 ppm or higher, or lead 500 ppm or higher.

Contamination from the Asarco smelter covers an area over 1,000 square miles. Due to the widespread contamination, Ecology does not have the resources to remove and replace soils on every yard over the cleanup level, 20 ppm arsenic or 250 ppm lead. An action level helps us prioritize our limited funding.

Q: What can I do to protect myself and my family?

A: You can still use the areas of your yard that are impacted, but we recommend avoiding contact with soils. Options include covering bare soils with mulch and repairing bare patches of lawn and gardening in raised beds. We also recommend healthy actions such as washing hands, taking shoes off at the door, regular vacuuming, and dusting with a damp cloth. Please see our brochures for more information.

Q: What is the health risk?

A: There is no immediate danger, but long-term, daily exposure slightly raises the risk of certain health problems. Arsenic can cause cancer and lead can harm children's developing brains and nervous systems. The health risk comes from breathing or swallowing it. Healthy actions like hand-washing and keeping toys clean lowers the chance of accidentally swallowing soil.

Q: What is the risk level at 100 ppm arsenic?

A: We estimate that being exposed to 100 ppm arsenic in soils may increase cancer risk by 150 in one million. That means in a population of one million people, there may be 150 cases above the background cancer rate. This is five times higher than the risk at the cleanup level of 20 ppm.

Q: Will having data about contamination hurt my property value?

A: Ecology does not know how contamination impacts property values. Hundreds of thousands of properties in the plume could have contamination. Consider that some homebuyers are already aware of the issue and may want to see sampling results. We can work with sellers and their real estate agents to put sampling results in context. We can also advise on ideas for reducing possible contact with contamination by covering bare soils.

Q: Do I have to disclose my results if I sell my home?

A: The Seller's Disclosure Statement (Form 17) does ask about soil contamination on the property. We recommend consulting with a real estate professional if you have questions about disclosure. Keep in mind that all yard sampling and cleanup data will be available on Ecology's public database.

Q: Where can I find my soil sampling results?

A: Visit the Dirt Alert-Arsenic in Soil database at <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/dirtalert>. If you need help accessing the data, please contact Amy Hargrove at 360-407-6262 or Amy.Hargrove@ecy.wa.gov.

Questions?

For more information about the **Yard Sampling and Cleanup Program**, please contact Crescent Calimpong at (360) 407-6790 or Crescent.Calimpong@ecy.wa.gov. Or visit our webpage at: <http://ecology.wa.gov/Tacoma-smelter>.

For more information about your soil sampling results, please contact your local health department:

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
(253) 798-3503
DirtAlert@tpchd.org
<http://www.tpchd.org/DirtAlert>



Public Health—Seattle & King County
(206) 477-DIRT
DirtAlert@kingcounty.gov
<http://www.kingcounty.gov/health/tsp>



To request materials in a format for the visually impaired, visit <https://ecology.wa.gov/accessibility>, call Ecology at (360) 407-6790, Relay Service 711, or TTY (877) 833-6341.

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