

Cleaning Up the Everett Smelter Site

Frequently Asked Questions



Toxics Cleanup Program

April 2010

Why is Ecology meeting with property owners now?

Between 1999 and 2007, Ecology successfully removed contaminated soils from properties with the highest concentration of contaminants. In 2007, Ecology created maps of 26 yards to choose sampling spots needed to characterize contamination. Ecology has identified properties with contamination, but needs to complete final mapping and sampling to determine in detail what cleanup activities need to be conducted. Ecology is asking property owners and tenants to update and sign access agreements so mapping and sampling of yards can be performed this summer. Sampled yards are expected to be cleaned up afterwards.



What caused the contamination?

Emissions from a lead smelter that operated in the early 1900s caused widespread arsenic and lead contamination in northeast Everett. In addition to contamination left behind on the old smelter property, particles from the stacks settled on the surrounding areas, contaminating soil where homes now stand. Contaminants of concern include arsenic, lead, antimony, cadmium, mercury, and thallium.

How does yard mapping and sampling benefit me?

In order to plan for cleanup, maps are needed to identify where samples should be collected. Ecology must analyze soil samples to determine whether cleanup is necessary and how much soil must be removed. When cleanup of contaminated properties is complete, the health risks from the arsenic contamination are removed or minimized.

Why do I need to submit another access agreement to allow Ecology to conduct mapping and sampling on my property? When is it due?

Some properties may have changed owners or occupants, changed contact information, re-landscaped their yards, or even changed their minds about sampling and cleanup since 2007. Therefore, it is important that Ecology update this information if it is to proceed with cleanup at these properties.

Property owners and tenants should sign and return access agreements to Ecology by June 15, 2010. If the access agreement is not signed, Ecology will not be able to map or sample your property. Signed access agreements may be mailed to:

Jerome Cruz
WA Department of Ecology
Toxics Cleanup Program
3190 160th Avenue SE
Bellevue, WA 98008

When the homeowner agrees to map and sample their property, it is expected that he or she will agree to have his or her yards cleaned up, too. Ecology will ask the homeowner to review and sign another access agreement for the final cleanup when the time comes.

When will mapping and sampling take place?

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If you have special accommodation needs or require this document in alternative formats, please contact Nancy Lui at (425) 649-7117 (Voice). Persons with hearing loss can call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability call 1-877-833-6341.

Ecology will conduct the final yard mapping and sampling this summer and fall. Soil sampling is expected to occur following Ecology's receipt of an approved access agreement and a follow up meeting with the homeowner.

What will happen during the mapping and sampling on my property?

The **mapping activity** involves the contractor (Science Applications International Corporation) walking around the outside of your home. The contractor may want to discuss landscaping or gardening features on your property. No heavy equipment will be used, and no holes will be dug in your yard. Completing the mapping now allows the contractor to get started right away if and when funding becomes available for sampling and cleanup.

The **sampling activity** requires some heavy equipment to gather adequate soil samples. The contractor uses a small farm tractor with the sampling equipment mounted on the front. Depending on soil conditions, sampling equipment may leave ruts in yards and tear up some grass. Sampling crews may need to temporarily remove some fencing to gain access. Because some fencing may have to be temporarily removed, pets should be placed in kennels or kept indoors. All fencing will be replaced and yards restored to the original condition after the sampling is completed. Homeowners are expected to clear away debris so the sampling crews can enter the yard. As part of the access agreement process, you will also be asked how to access the crawl space under your home for mapping and sampling activities.

How will I know when Ecology is planning to map or sample my property?

We will call you to schedule a date in June or July to map and/or sample the yard areas of your property. We will inform you of what hours to expect us so you may secure pets or move any equipment that might block our access. When we do sampling, we will need to know how to gain access to the crawl space under your home. You will be asked how to access your crawl space as part of the access agreement process. The contractors doing the mapping may also request to see the access point. We also want to know of any landscaping activities on your property that may have moved large quantities of soil or fill material.

What areas of my property will Ecology need to map and sample?

The mapping and sampling involve only the outdoor yards, crawl spaces, driveways, and landscaping areas.

Each yard will be divided into two or more "Decision Units" (DUs). DUs are areas that will be sampled as a unit. Samples will be taken to a depth of 48 inches from between 5 and 12 locations in each large DU, depending on the size of the area. Results from these samples are used to decide if the soil within a DU must be excavated and, if so, to what depth.

Ecology will also identify planting beds or gardens that the owner or tenant wishes to keep, but still have sampled. Samples are collected from several locations in each planting bed or garden to a depth of 24 inches. Each 6-inch layer of these samples will be tested to determine the arsenic concentration at that level. The results for each of the sampling locations are provided on a separate table so that the arsenic concentrations in the landscape areas are known.

Soil is generally taken from four locations in the crawl space. If there is plastic covering the soil, it is pulled back and then replaced. Soil from each of the locations is combined into one sample and tested to provide an average concentration of arsenic in the crawl space.

For more information contact:

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