

General Questions

What is the Everett Smelter Site?

The Everett Smelter Site is located in north Everett, Snohomish County, Washington. A smelter operated on the site from 1894 to 1912. The smelter was built by the Puget Sound Reduction Company and sold to ASARCO Incorporated (Asarco) in 1903. Asarco operated the smelter until 1912, and demolished it between 1912 and 1915. Emissions from the smelter caused arsenic, lead, and associated metals contamination in the surrounding area. The Department of Ecology (Ecology) was alerted about the contamination problem by Weyerhaeuser in October 1990. Ecology is leading the cleanup at the site. Arsenic is the main contaminant of concern and therefore the cleanup standards are based on soil arsenic concentrations.

Why did it take so long to initiate the cleanup?

Ecology and Asarco, the company that owned the smelter, investigated the site and discussed how to clean it up for years. Asarco eventually sued Ecology regarding the site before any cleanup plans were finalized. Ecology began cleanup in 1999 using funds from the state cleanup account. In 2005, Asarco declared bankruptcy. Ecology continued the cleanup effort based on available funding. Ecology also filed a bankruptcy claim against Asarco for Asarco's environmental liabilities in Washington State. In 2009, Ecology received a final bankruptcy settlement from Asarco. This settlement provides funds for continuing cleanup of the Everett Smelter Site.

Do I live within the Everett Smelter cleanup area?

The cleanup area is located in north Everett. Please visit our website to view the site map and see if you live in the cleanup area: http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/asarco/es_main.html

Is my soil contaminated if I live within the Everett Smelter cleanup area?

Not necessarily. Arsenic levels vary widely across properties, due to wind deposition patterns and property history. For example, soil disturbance from construction or landscaping may have reduced levels of contamination. Property-specific sampling is needed to determine arsenic levels in your soil.

Why is Ecology cleaning up the Everett Smelter Site if Asarco caused the contamination?

Ecology is cleaning up the site because Asarco declared bankruptcy and resolved its environmental liability through bankruptcy proceedings. Ecology received a bankruptcy settlement of \$44 million from Asarco for cleanup of the Everett Smelter Site. Ecology is now using the funds to clean up the site and to reimburse past costs incurred by Ecology for site cleanup.

Where can I find more information about the Everett Smelter cleanup?

For more information about the Everett Smelter cleanup, please visit our website http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/tcp/sites/asarco/es_main.html. If you have questions about the cleanup, please contact Nancy Lui, Public Involvement Coordinator at (425) 649-7117, Jerome Cruz Upland Area Site Manager at (425) 649-7094, or David L. South, Lowland Area Site Manager at (425) 649-7200.

You can also find information about the Everett Smelter cleanup at:

Ecology Northwest Regional Office
3190 160th Avenue SE
Bellevue, WA 98008. Please call for an appointment (425) 649-7190.

Everett Public Library,
2702 Hoyt Avenue
Everett, WA 98201, (425) 257-8000.

Cleanup Process Questions

What are the benefits of the cleanup?

Cleanup will reduce long-term health risks caused by ingestion of arsenic-contaminated soil. This is a benefit for both current and future owners of property impacted by the smelter.

What is my responsibility as a property owner knowing that my property is contaminated?

As a property owner, you are legally responsible for contamination on your property. If you have contamination on your property, you are required to disclose it when you sell your home.

What happens if I don't sign the access agreement?

If you do not want to participate in the cleanup, Ecology will not conduct any work on your property. Declining the mapping and sampling also means that Ecology will not clean up your property when the other homes near yours are scheduled for cleanup. The contamination on your property will remain, and you will be responsible for properly managing the contamination. You will also be required to disclose the contamination if you ever sell your property. If you later change your mind and decide to allow clean up on your property, please contact Ecology to see if this is possible. Depending on the progress of cleanup in your area, you may be placed at the end of the cleanup queue. It is not certain that the funds from the bankruptcy settlement are sufficient to clean up all contaminated properties within the Everett Smelter Site.

How will the cleanup be carried out?

Ecology developed a Cleanup Action Plan (CAP) in 1999 with input from stakeholders. The CAP outlines the cleanup approach and the soil arsenic concentrations that will be removed from properties. Only accessible soil will be removed in the cleanup area. Contaminated soil beneath buildings and pavement will remain behind and must be properly managed when exposed.

Based on mapping and sampling results, a property-specific cleanup plan will be created with owner input. This property-specific cleanup plan will specify what areas will be excavated and to what depth. The plan will also include restoration plans for each property. Ecology and its contractors SAIC and EnviroIssues will be in contact with the property owner and residents throughout the cleanup.

When will my property be cleaned up? How did Ecology determine the property cleanup years?

Ecology is cleaning up yards starting with the most contaminated. Ecology has developed a cleanup strategy that groups adjacent homes to make the cleanup more efficient. Approximately 42 homes will be included in the 2010-2011 cleanup. Please visit our website to view a map that shows the cleanup groups identified for each year.

What cleanup levels are being used?

Ecology uses the Washington State cleanup standards for the Everett Smelter cleanup. The state level for arsenic contamination is 20 parts per million (ppm). Arsenic contaminated soil within one foot of the surface is cleaned up if it exceeds 20 ppm on average. Higher arsenic concentrations may remain at depths exceeding one foot if arsenic concentrations are below specified levels. Lead associated with the arsenic is cleaned up when the arsenic is cleaned up. Most properties remaining to be cleaned up do not have lead concentrations exceeding the lead cleanup level of 353 ppm.

Health Effects and Risk Questions

What are the health effects of arsenic and lead? How can I be exposed?

Arsenic and lead are both toxic metals that are especially harmful to children. Arsenic exposure has been linked to heart disease, diabetes, and cancer of the bladder, lung, skin, kidney, liver, and prostate. Lead can cause behavioral problems, permanent learning difficulties, and reduced physical growth. You can be exposed to arsenic and lead associated with the Everett Smelter site by eating contaminated soil or breathing dust from contaminated soil.

Please visit the Arsenic and Lead website for fact sheets from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/>. Most of the properties within the Everett Smelter site with elevated levels of lead have been cleaned up. The primary health concern on properties remaining to be cleaned up is arsenic.

Can I be exposed to arsenic and lead by eating vegetables and fruit from my garden?

Vegetables and fruit have low uptake rates from the soil. Wash home grown fruits and vegetables before eating to remove any contaminated soil on the surface. Consider gardening in raised bed gardens filled with soil imported from a known, clean source.

How can I test my soil for arsenic and lead?

Ecology has brochures with step-by-step instructions on how to take your own soil samples and get them analyzed. There is no need to buy special tools. You will need a garden trowel, stainless steel bowl, and spoon, gloves, and Ziploc bags. Laboratories generally charge \$30 - \$40 per sample analyzed. If you own or manage a childcare within the Soil Safety Program's Service Area, you may be eligible for free soil sampling and funding assistance.

For more information about the Soil Safety Program, please contact Amy Hargrove at (360) 407-6790 or by e-mail at amy.hargrove@ecy.wa.gov.

What should I do if I test my soil and find elevated levels of arsenic or lead?

Ecology offers soil safety guidance brochures that explain what to do after you get your soil sample results. You and your family should take precautionary measures, such as washing hands after being outside and taking off shoes. This is especially important for children. You can also cover or remove contaminated soils, or mix them with clean soils. If you find arsenic levels over 100 ppm, please contact the Department of Ecology.

I don't plan to test my soil, what can I do to protect myself without knowing what the arsenic and lead levels are?

As a precaution, you can take actions such as washing hands after being outside and taking off shoes. These actions can help protect you and your family from a variety of possible soil pollutants.

Contracting Question

How does a contractor get to work on the Everett Smelter Cleanup Project?

Ecology will hold an open and competitive bid for excavating and restoring yards slated for cleanup. Ecology will advertise the invitation to bid in newspapers. A contractor could participate in the work either by being the successful bidder in this process, or by working as a subcontractor to the successful bidder. For more information on the status of contracting for this project, you can call Bob Swackhamer, contracting officer for Ecology's Toxics Cleanup Program, at (360) 407-7210 and robert.swackhamer@ecy.wa.gov.

Special accommodations:

To ask about the availability of this document in a version for the visually impaired, call Nancy Lui at (425) 649-7117. Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service. Persons with a speech disability, call (877) 833-6341.