

Tacoma Smelter Plume Annual Update

The Department of Ecology provides this annual update about cleanup activities on Vashon-Maury Island

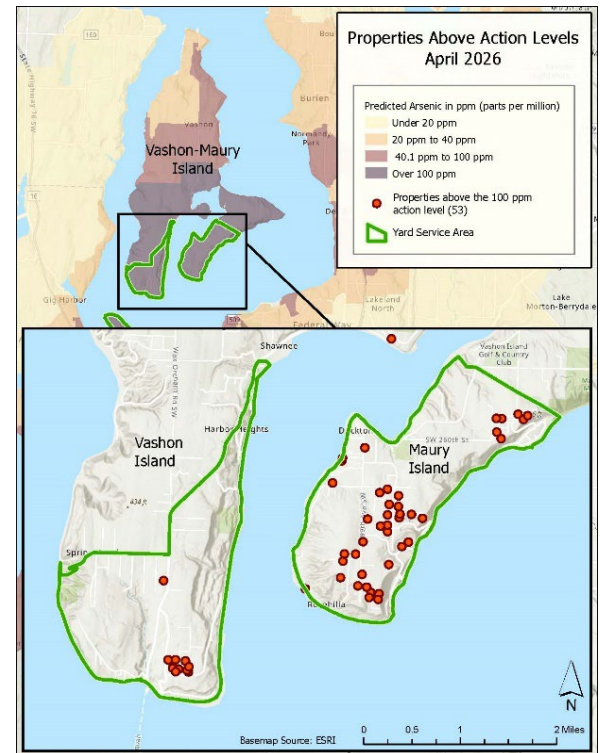
Arsenic and Lead on Vashon Island

For nearly 100 years, Asarco operated a copper smelter in north Tacoma. Air pollution from the smelter settled on the surface soil across more than 1,000 square miles of the Puget Sound region.

Arsenic, lead, and other metals remain in the soil because of this pollution.

The State of Washington received settlement funds from Asarco to fund activities including cleanup of child play areas and residential yards, promoting healthy actions and advising property developers. This newsletter provides updates about these activities and updates from local partners.

The map at right shows the predicted levels of arsenic across the island. The red dots show the 53 individual properties with arsenic levels above 100 parts per million. 35 property owners chose to participate in the voluntary cleanup program.



Map of predicted arsenic levels

Risks to Human Health

Arsenic and lead are toxic metals that can pose risks if ingested or inhaled. They are not absorbed through the skin. **Arsenic and lead in soil do not pose an immediate health risk, but long-term exposure increases the risk of certain health problems.**

Lead is linked to developmental disabilities in children and may affect IQ. Arsenic may cause some types of cancer later in life and contribute to heart disease.

Children under age six are at greatest risk because they put things into their mouths and are still growing and developing.

Healthy Actions

The easiest way to protect you and your family from arsenic and lead is to avoid swallowing or breathing in contaminated soil.

Wear gloves when working outside and wash your hands with soap. If you grow vegetables, scrub them well and peel root vegetables. Consider growing vegetables in raised beds with clean soil.

Wash children's toys frequently. Cover bare patches of soil where children play.

Take your shoes off at the door. Wipe your pet's paws after outdoor play. Mop and vacuum often.

Para leer este anuncio en español, visite nuestro sitio web en: Dirtalert.info

ECOLOGY PROGRAM UPDATES

Residential Yard Sampling & Cleanup Program (Yard Program)

The Yard Program offers free sampling and soil replacement services to eligible residential properties with the highest soil contamination in the plume. About 1,200 properties on Vashon-Maury Island and North Tacoma qualify for soil replacement in the Yard Program service area. 415 of these properties have received soil replacement so far through our voluntary program.

Educational Sampling

Ecology offers free educational sampling for residential properties not located in the Yard Program Service area. This sampling is most helpful for areas where young children play, areas with exposed soil, or for areas where you garden.

To learn if your property is eligible for the Yard Program or for educational sampling, please check the Dirt Alert Map. The Dirt Alert map shows which residential properties were tested, which properties qualified for soil replacement through the Yard Program, and which properties had their soil replaced. **Scan the QR code at right or visit [Ecology.wa.gov/DirtAlertMap](https://ecology.wa.gov/DirtAlertMap).**



If you have questions about educational sampling or eligibility for the Yard Program, please contact Sarah Miller, Outreach Coordinator, at Sarah.Miller@ecy.wa.gov

Real Estate

If you are buying or selling a home in the Tacoma Smelter Plume area, refer to the Dirt Alert map to see if the home had soil sampling done or participated in the Yard Program. Sellers must fill out Form 17, which asks about known contamination. Please seek legal advice if you have questions about filling out this form.

Protecting Children

The Soil Safety Program works with licensed childcares, parks, and schools to protect children. We have sampled and tested over 1,000 existing play areas in King, Pierce, and Thurston counties. Through this effort, we have found over 100 play areas with elevated arsenic or lead levels and completed soil safety actions on nearly all of them. Examples of soil safety actions include removing contaminated soil and replacing with clean soil, covering soil with a physical barrier, and posting informational signage.

Property Development

We provide free technical advice to property owners and developers who clean up soil contamination. Arsenic and lead from the Plume are usually in the top six inches of soil. Development, especially through digging and grading, is a great time to take care of contaminated soil and reduce risks for future residents. To receive Ecology's written approval of cleanup, the property must enroll in our Voluntary Cleanup Program (VCP). Getting written approvals via the VCP is free for projects that only deal with Tacoma smelter plume contamination. **To learn more, scan the QR code at the right to reach our Technical Assistance webpage.**



Ecology is currently working with properties in Pierce and King County to mediate soil contamination. **Contact Diana.Ison@ecy.wa.gov if you are developing property inside the plume and are interested in the program.**

Test Your Soil at the Strawberry Festival

This summer, King Conservation District and the Department of Ecology are partnering to bring **free lead and arsenic soil testing to Vashon's Strawberry Festival!**

Bring a one-cup sample of your soil to our SoilSHOP booth at the festival and we will email you with your lead and arsenic results. Our staff on-site will be available to answer your soil testing questions and provide expert guidance about how to manage your soil.

Bring your soil sample to the Strawberry Festival on:

- Saturday, July 18th, between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM
- Sunday, July 19th, between 10:00 AM and 5:00 PM



Look for the King Conservation District and Department of Ecology SoilSHOP booth!

How to take a soil sample:

To take a soil sample, consider sampling from areas in your yard that are high traffic, such as areas where children play, the garden, or any area where you may be digging in the soil. Then follow these steps:

1. Remove grass, mulch, or debris from the soil surface to expose just the dirt.
2. Dig a hole six inches deep and take your sample from all layers of the soil between the surface and the bottom of the hole.
3. Collect one cup of soil into a clean, labeled and sealed plastic bag.
4. Bring your sample to us at the Strawberry Festival, and we'll take care of the rest!

An important note about soil samples: ASARCO stopped operations in the late 1980s. Soil that has been mostly undisturbed since then is more likely to have contamination associated with the smelter. Soil that has been worked since then, for example a garden plot where compost has been continuously added every year, or a landscaping bed where mulch and leaves have broken down over the years, are more likely to have diluted levels of contamination.



**RSVP for the SoilSHOP and
learn more by scanning the QR code
or kingcd.org/soilshops/**



This Department of Ecology annual newsletter provides updates about our efforts managing contamination left by the Asarco Smelter. We send it to everyone living in areas most affected by the Plume.

Contact information

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ADA accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-999-3186 or email at Sarah.Miller@ecy.wa.gov3, or visit ecology.wa.gov/ADA. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.

Former Asarco Smelter (now Pt. Ruston)

