

Extensive Lead Sampling in Port Richmond, Staten Island Finds Paint and Other Sources Culprit for Lead in Backyards

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(New York, NY) After extensive sampling of soil from numerous properties near the Jewett White Lead site on the north shore of Staten Island, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has concluded that lead in backyard soil and other areas is most likely from lead-based paint and other sources not associated with the lead contamination at the Jewett White Lead site. EPA's conclusions are the result of months of specialized analyses designed to "fingerprint" the lead from the Jewett site to see if it has migrated to surrounding areas. Lead is a toxic metal that is especially dangerous to children six years old and younger because their growing bodies can absorb more of it than adults. If undetected, children with high levels of lead in their blood can suffer damage to their brains and nervous systems and have behavior and learning problems. EPA is continuing its work under the federal Superfund program to clean up the lead contamination at the Jewett site and has asked both the state and city departments of health to address lead concerns from other sources through their urban lead programs. The Agency plans a public meeting to discuss the results on Tuesday, March 23.

"EPA did extensive detective work in Port Richmond to find out if the lead in people's yards could be attributed to the Jewett site," said Judith Enck, EPA Regional Administrator. "We fully understand the seriousness of the lead problem and are working with health agencies on actions that can be taken to protect the residents in the area. We want to make sure residents, especially families with young children, are aware of the various programs designed to reduce exposure to lead inside and outside their homes."

In June 2009, EPA collected nearly 250 soil samples from the backyards of 13 residential properties closest to the Jewett site, as well as from the curbs and curb lines in a six-block area near the site. The Agency also collected what are called "background" samples from an area along Harrison Avenue, further away from the site, to establish the average lead level in an area not affected by Jewett White Lead's operations, and to have a point of comparison to areas close to the site. The results of some samples from the background area had higher levels of lead than those from the yards and soil near the Jewett site. For example, lead levels in soil samples collected beneath the train trestle three blocks from the Jewett site were higher than from areas directly adjacent to the site.

The average lead concentration in the backyard soil samples was 549 parts per million (ppm) in the surface soil. This concentration is higher than the 400 ppm level used by EPA to determine if a cleanup should be considered. The levels ranged from 11 ppm to 3,510 ppm and the highest lead levels were found in the area surrounding and extending out about three feet from a building. This finding led to the conclusion that the lead was most likely a result of weathered or peeling paint.

In addition, EPA collected samples from beneath the railroad line, which is directly south of the Jewett site, from both at the site fence line and the fence line closer to the residential properties. EPA also tested road grit and dust from street curbs next to and under the train trestle and soil from the Moran Towing property located at 2015 Richmond Terrace, where Jewett White Lead Company originated its operations in 1839. Jewett later expanded its business across Richmond Terrace to include the property located at 2000-2012 Richmond Terrace in the 1890s.

Lead is a very persistent heavy metal that comes from a variety of sources; it is particularly found in areas with homes that have lead-based paint and traffic that deposited lead from lead-based gasoline onto the soil in the period before it was banned. The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the New York

State Department of Health both have programs to address urban lead problems and have agreed to provide detailed information to residents on how they can effectively and safely deal with lead in their homes and in their backyards.

On the Jewett site, EPA required the owner to control stormwater on the site to prevent lead-contaminated soil from leaving the property. EPA's work at the site continues and will result in a full cleanup of the lead-contaminated soil.

The public meeting will be held from 7 pm to 9 pm at P.S. 20 Elementary School located at 161 Park Avenue in Staten Island. Representatives from EPA, New York State Department of Health, and New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene will give presentations to the public and answer questions.

For more information on the Jewett White Lead site, visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/region02/superfund/removal/jewettwhitelead/index.html>.

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/d10ed0d99d826b068525735900400c2a/38c1cae34d1b5b8b852576ee0062228d!OpenDocument>