



East Helena Superfund Site Residential Yard Cleanups

November 30, 2023

Why is EPA proposing to reduce the cleanup level in East Helena?

- The 2009 Record of Decision for Residential Yards and Undeveloped Lands in East Helena resulted in the cleanup of hundreds of yards in East Helena to a level of 500 ppm soil-lead or lower. However, cleanup to this level only occurred if yards contained soil-lead in concentrations greater than 1,000 ppm, which was consistent with scientific understanding of the danger of soil-lead exposure at the time. Advances in science as well a better understanding of the bioavailability—how easily something is absorbed by the body if ingested—of lead has led EPA to reevaluate the cleanup level of soil-lead in yards in East Helena.
- Modifying the soil-lead cleanup level requires EPA to draft a document called an Explanation of Significant Difference (ESD). The proposed ESD, which is now available for public comment, would remove the 1,000 ppm lead action level and lower the residential lead cleanup level to 400 ppm.

What does a comment period entail? What difference will it make?

- Comment periods are opportunities for the public to provide meaningful input on EPA’s proposed plans. These comments can help EPA understand how community members and stakeholders feel about proposed plans and may also contribute to EPA’s understanding of the ways a proposed plan will affect certain groups. Public comments may also inform EPA’s approach to implementation of the proposed plan.
- Public comments are part of the public record and are taken into consideration as EPA finalizes its draft plans. Only written comments can be accepted.
- This comment period will last through December 15th. Community members and other interested parties are welcome to submit their comments via email to Mackenzie Meter (meter.mackenzie@epa.gov) or Bridget Williams (williams.bridget@epa.gov), or send them via regular mail to:

Environmental Protection Agency c/o Mackenzie Meter
10 W 15th Street
Helena, MT, 59626

What happens next?

- After the public comment period ends, EPA will take all comments into consideration and provide responses where appropriate. If there are no substantial objections to the proposal to lower the cleanup level to 400 ppm, EPA will move forward with finalizing the ESD. After that point, EPA will start the process to bring on a contractor to perform residential yard cleanups beginning in 2024.
- EPA's goal is to clean up yards and yard areas in East Helena with soil lead concentrations greater than 400 ppm. Cleanup in residential yards—which also includes daycares, alleys, road aprons, and unpaved roads—would entail the removal of affected soils down to a depth of at least 18 inches. Yards then would receive clean soil and sod or the equivalent of what currently exists in the yard.

How can I limit exposure to lead (Pb)? Who is most vulnerable?

- If you are concerned about you or your family's exposure to lead, we recommend working with your healthcare provider to schedule a blood-lead level testing. Lewis & Clark County, through its [Lead Education and Assistance Program \(LEAP\)](#), fully covers blood-lead level testing in East Helena. When you make your appointment for blood-lead testing, make sure to contact Beth Norberg at bnorberg@lccountymt.gov. Additionally, we encourage all children under seven years old to have their blood tested for lead. While exposure to lead is harmful across the lifespan, it is especially harmful to young children.
- EPA's goal is to clean up all residential yards in East Helena with 400 ppm or greater soil-lead concentrations, but residences, including daycares, with vulnerable populations—e.g., children, grandchildren, pregnant people—will be prioritized.

Questions or Concerns?

- EPA contacts:
 - Mackenzie Meter, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator
Email: meter.mackenzie@epa.gov
Call: 406-970-5806
 - Bridget Williams, East Helena Superfund Site Project Manager
Email: williams.bridget@epa.gov
Call/Text: 406-594-8792
- Lewis and Clark County Public Health
 - Lead Education and Assistance Program (LEAP)
<https://www.lccountymt.gov/Government/Public-Health/Healthy-Kids/Lead-Education-and-Assistance>
- CDC Lead Poisoning Prevention Guidance
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm>