

## Q & A about Contamination at Veteran's Field and Edgerton Elementary School

### BACKGROUND

Veteran's Field, on Cedar Grove Avenue in New London was once used as a landfill. Industrial waste was placed there sometime before the early 1930s. During the late 1950s, the City of New London built Edgerton Elementary School next to Veteran's Field. Samples taken in 2003 at Veteran's Field showed elevated levels of contaminants, primarily arsenic, lead, and a small amount of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in surface soil and soil beneath the surface.



In the spring of 2005, the City of New London received money from the state to pay for further testing of the Field and to clean up the soil. The city hired a contractor to do the work. Soil testing is complete and cleanup of Veteran's Field is nearly complete.



### DID ANY CONTAMINATION FROM THE SOIL IN VETERAN'S FIELD GET INSIDE EDGERTON SCHOOL?

No, indoor dust and air sampling shows that there is no contamination inside of the school.



### WAS ANY CONTAMINATION FOUND IN SOIL ON THE EDGERTON SCHOOL PROPERTY?

There is a tree-lined area near the southeastern boundary of the school property with a slightly elevated level of arsenic. This area is currently covered with gravel. We do not expect anyone to be exposed to the soil because of the cover. The gravel will be maintained by the city.



## WHAT ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN DURING CLEANUP OF VETERAN'S FIELD TO MAKE SURE THAT CONTAMINATED DUST AND SOIL DOES NOT SPREAD OFF THE FIELD?

City contractors have used water trucks to wet the soil to prevent dusty conditions. In addition, city contractors have done dust monitoring around the work area, and used monitors placed on the clean-up workers to make sure that the dust has not spread off the field. The monitors did not show any elevated dust levels leaving the work area. There is also a weather station installed on the school roof to further assist in the air monitoring process.



## WHAT WAS FOUND IN SOIL AT VETERAN'S FIELD?

→Elevated levels of contaminants, primarily arsenic, lead, and a small amount of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) in surface soil and soil beneath the surface in various areas of the field. This contamination is being cleaned up.

→The grassy slope just outside the pre-school playground fence has elevated arsenic in surface and sub-surface soil. This area will be cleaned up this summer. The pre-school playground fence has been temporarily moved closer to the school to provide the contractor with more space for clean up work and to restrict access to the slope.



## BACKGROUND ON ARSENIC AND LEAD

### **Arsenic:**

Arsenic is found in nature at low levels. The major uses of arsenic are as wood preservatives and agricultural pesticides. Arsenic is very widely distributed in the environment and everyone is exposed to low levels. Long-term exposure to arsenic can increase the risk of skin, bladder, kidney, liver, and lung cancer. Exposure to arsenic can also lead to skin effects such as irritation and skin darkening.

### **Lead**

Lead is a naturally occurring bluish gray metal found in small amounts in the earth's crust. Lead has many uses, most importantly, in the use of batteries. Lead is also used in ammunition, metal products like pipes and solder, roofing, and devices to shield X-rays. Lead exposure can affect almost every organ and system in your body. The most sensitive is the central nervous system, particularly in children. Lead exposure in children and the fetus can lead to pre-term births, decreased mental ability, learning difficulties and decreased growth in children. Lead also damages the kidneys and immune system. It is uncertain whether lead exposure causes cancer.

For more information on these chemicals, visit the website for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) website at <http://atsdr.cdc.gov>



## HOW DO WE EVALUATE HEALTH RISKS?

CT DPH is in the process of evaluating risks from potential exposure to contaminated soil from Veteran's Field. This evaluation is not yet complete. However, it is very unlikely that exposures that may have occurred would lead to any illness. It is important to understand how CTDPH evaluates exposures and how we make **decisions about health risks** for hazardous waste sites. The first step is to find out if there has been exposure to contaminants. Then we try to find out how long people were exposed and to how much contamination. Then we estimate cancer and other health risks. Finally, we come to a conclusion about whether the exposure is likely to cause illness. If we conclude that exposures may have caused disease, we may recommend further studies. Here are some concepts important in evaluating health risks to contaminants:

- **“Exposure”** means that you have come into contact with a chemical (breathing, eating, touching), and it has entered into your body.
- If you are **not exposed** to a chemical, **it won't make you sick**.
- CTDPH is required to use accepted science-based methods when we evaluate health risks. When CTDPH analyzes environmental data, we use conservative (most protective of health) health guidelines and approaches to reach our conclusions and make our recommendations.
- It is very difficult to determine if people have become sick from a site, even though it may be shown that people were likely exposed. This is because of many complicated factors:
  - ⇒ Were people exposed long enough and to enough of the contaminant?
  - ⇒ What are other exposures?
  - ⇒ What are some lifestyle issues such as diet, smoking, etc?

**Just because we may not be able to say that people have become sick from contaminants, this does not mean the community should not be concerned or work to clean up the site. Preventing exposures is very important!**



## WHAT IS THE STATUS OF VETERAN'S FIELD?

Veteran's Field is currently being cleaned up so that the property can be used temporarily to house portable buildings for Jennings Elementary School. The city is hoping to complete the work this summer when school is out.

### **For Further Information, please contact:**

Sharee Rusnak  
CT Department of Public Health  
(860) 509-7742

Eileen Barnes  
CT Department of Environmental Protection  
(860) 424-3090

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