

FACT SHEET



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Soil Management for Property Owners and Residents in the American Lead EAA

Office of Land Quality

317-232-8603 • 800-451-6027

idem.IN.gov

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

Introduction:

The former American Lead Facility, located at 2102 Hillside Avenue in Indianapolis, was used for industrial purposes dating back to at least the late 1800s. National Lead Industries (NL Industries) conducted secondary lead smelting at the property from 1946 to 1965. Historic operations at the smelter emitted fine particles of lead which landed in yards and contaminated the surface soil of the surrounding community. The use of fill material containing lead and deposits from leaded gasoline exhaust, and other industrial activities in the area, also caused some residential yards to be contaminated with lead.

Background

In response, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) tested soil from homes in the neighborhood and affected soils were removed from several hundred properties. A final round of testing was conducted in 2023 to determine if additional remediation was required, and those impacted soils were removed in 2025.

Properties within the Environmental Advisory Area (EAA) fall into one of four categories:

1. **Not tested:** Status unknown. Soil at the property was not sampled because the property was vacant; the property owner did not grant access or permission to test the soil, or the property was outside the investigation boundary.
2. **Tested and safe:** Lead concentrations measured below the cleanup threshold, so no soil replacement was necessary.
3. **Tested and remediated:** The soil from the property was sampled and lead impacted soil was removed completely and replaced with clean soil.
4. **Tested and partially cleaned up:** The soil from the property was sampled and contaminated soil was removed to a limited depth. Lead impacted soil was removed to a depth of about 1 foot of soil in common yard areas and up to 2 feet of soil in gardens or play areas. After excavation, an **orange construction fence** was placed flat on top of remaining soil to indicate where lead contamination begins. Clean soil was placed on top of the orange fence at either 1 foot or two feet as indicated above.

As of December 2025, the American Lead project is closed; no additional remedial action will be conducted. Property owners can request lead sampling for properties within the Environmental Advisory Area by contacting IDEM at 317-234-8622 or the Marion County Public Health Department at 317-221-2155.

What the Orange Construction Fence Means

If the property was partially cleaned up, there will be an orange mesh fence buried in the yard at about 1-2 feet deep. The orange fence is a warning sign. It shows where the clean soil ends and the lead impacted soil begins.

- Soil **above the fence** is clean and safe.
- Soil **below the fence** still contains lead.
- **Do not remove the fence.**
- **If the fence is disturbed** during construction or landscaping, it should be put back in place.
- **Do not dig below the fence.** This will expose lead impacted soil. If the project requires digging below the orange fence, follow the steps below.

Disturbing or Disposing of Contaminated Soil

Working with soil contaminated with lead requires a few basic **safety precautions**:

- Before any digging project, call [811](tel:811).
- Wear long pants, long-sleeved shirt and gloves.
- Brush off any loose dirt on clothes while still outside.
- Launder clothes upon entering the house.
- **For Small Projects** (like planting trees or landscaping):
 - Keep the clean soil (above the orange fence) separate from the lead impacted soil (below the fence).
 - **Soil from below the fence should not be placed directly on the ground.**
 - **Put lead impacted soil in a sealed container, like a plastic trash can or:**
 - **Put it back in the hole and cover it with at least 1 foot of clean soil, or**
 - **Place it in a plastic bag and throw it away with household trash** (check with your waste collection service)
- **For Big Projects** (such as sewer repairs or projects requiring significant excavation):
 - Contact IDEM at americanlead@idem.IN.gov or **317-234-8622**.

Gardens

Lead exposure from eating fruits or vegetables grown in soil that contains lead can be a health risk, especially for children. Lead in dirt and dust can coat the surface of fruits or vegetables and could be absorbed by fruits and vegetables as they grow.

- Use raised beds for gardening.
- Wash hands immediately after gardening.
- Wash and scrub fruits and vegetables with a brush to help remove bits of soil and dust.
- Peel or skin root crops such as carrots, potatoes, turnips, and onions before eating them.
- Discard the outer leaves of leafy vegetables (lettuce, cabbage, brussels sprouts, etc.).

Populations at Risk

Children under 6 years old and pregnant women are at the highest risk for lead exposure. Children who are exposed to lead may grow more slowly and have more trouble learning than other children. They may suffer damage to their brains, nerves, hearing, or speech. Lead toxicity can also damage an unborn child's brain, kidneys, and nervous system. Find more information at epa.gov/lead

How to Keep Your Family Safe from Lead

- Take shoes off before coming inside, especially after digging.
- Wash hands and clothes after working outside.
- Keep indoor surfaces clean and free of dust.
- Be sure and wash hands before eating.

For More Information

- **Marion County Public Health Department:** 317-221-2155
marionhealth.org/provider_pb_poisoning_info
- **IDEM Toll-Free Number:** 317-234-8622 or 800-451-6027 or idem.IN.gov
- **U.S. EPA American Lead cleanup page:**
cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0501643
- **IDEM American Lead information page:** idem.IN.gov/cleanups/sites-of-special-interest/american-lead