



**SUMMER 2023**

## Current and Upcoming Activities

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to closely review and act on the issues raised in the *Wall Street Journal's* investigation of lead covered telecommunications cables across the U.S. As part of this work, EPA sampled soil for lead in an area near some telecommunications cables in West Orange, New Jersey on August 1, 2023. EPA's scientific review of the data and current conditions in the area indicate that there are no immediate threats to the health of people nearby.

The results do show that some soil samples have lead concentrations above an EPA screening level of 400 parts per million. All areas tested were primarily from areas covered with grass. Grass provides a natural barrier to reduce exposure and a good cover to prevent soil dust from being easily kicked up. EPA's assessment of the data takes into account that most of the areas sampled are covered with grass and are not where children gather for long periods of time.

EPA has established a national working group to consider next steps to ensure the public remains safe. These steps may include further analyses in West Orange to better understand if the cables have released and continue to release lead. Any future actions will be done in coordination with state and local leaders, and the public will remain informed of any actions taken.

In addition to sampling, EPA has required major telecommunications companies to provide us with information needed to evaluate the nature and extent of releases or threatened releases of lead from telecommunications cables and equipment, including results of inspections the companies have undertaken, as well as sampling results and data.

## Background on EPA Sampling Efforts

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EPA uses screening-level sampling to initially characterize soil lead concentrations. EPA sampled soil in publicly accessible areas directly underneath lead-covered telecommunications cables between the road and the sidewalk and in front of the Gregory Elementary School, on the opposite side of the street from the cables. EPA collected 192 samples underneath the cables across the street from the school at 30-foot intervals and at three different depths. EPA also took 51 samples in front of the school at 100-foot intervals at the same three depths and were used to characterize lead concentrations.

## Lead Contamination

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There is no safe level of lead exposure. Young children are particularly at risk for health effects from exposure to lead, and EPA will take all actions within its authorities to ensure children are safe and protected from any potential exposure.

EPA is releasing this sampling data because we value full transparency. We have shared the sampling data and are coordinating closely with the town of West Orange, County of Essex, the school administration and state environmental and health experts. To view the sampling data, [visit EPA's website](#).



**Lead** is a natural metal that can be found in air, water, and soil. When lead is released into the air, it may be transported long distances before it lands and stays on the ground. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in your body, particularly the nervous system.

**For more information about lead, visit:**

[EPA's Lead website](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#)

[The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry \(ATSDR\) website](#)

[Essex County Health Department website](#)

[Department of Health website](#)

## Simple Steps to Reduce Your Lead Exposure

The following steps are recommended to reduce your potential exposure to lead contamination that may be present in urban soil.

- Remove shoes at the door before entering your home to prevent tracking in any dirt that may be on your shoes. Clean the bottom of your shoes with a wet wipe or paper towel.
- Wash your hands and face after coming in from outside and before eating, drinking, or smoking. Wash children's toys and items they place in their mouths.
- Avoid digging into or disturbing soil if possible, and wash hands and face afterwards.

**For more information about getting your child tested for lead in NJ, visit:**

[Department of Health website](#)

## EPA Contact Information

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[EPA's West Orange Lead Cables Website](#)