

Contaminated land parcels update

On Friday, March 16, 2018, Alberta Health Services (AHS) Environmental Public Health issued four Executive Officer's Orders related to four separate parcels of land in northeast Edmonton that once housed a wood processing plant from 1924 until 1987.

AHS took this action following new testing data which indicates that contaminants on parcels X, Y and the Greenbelt site pose a potential risk of harm to the health of people who may have accessed those areas.

Exposure to these contaminants in large amounts or over long periods of time could lead to an increase in the risk to human health.

While recent testing has not been conducted on the berm which runs at the southern end of parcel C, there is some risk that contaminated soil may have migrated to the berm.

We have therefore also issued an Executive Officer's Order related to the berm on parcel C. We have not been made aware of any immediate health concerns that may be related to exposure to chemicals in the soil or groundwater. AHS' first priority is ensuring the safety of residents and anyone who may have accessed those specific areas.

The Executive Officer's Orders require the owners to take immediate action to secure the site and restrict access, and put in place any measures such as fencing and signage, to minimize any potential health risks to members of the public in the immediate surrounding areas.

Out of caution, the Government of Alberta is undertaking additional testing and analysis in nearby residential communities to make sure Albertans are not being exposed to harmful chemicals. People who live in close proximity to parcels X and Y, the berm on parcel C, and the Greenbelt site should avoid going into the sites in question and take the following precautions while further testing is underway:

- Wash hands thoroughly after working or playing outdoors. Be sure to help toddlers and children wash their hands.
- If clothes or shoes are heavily soiled with mud or dirt, wash them apart from other household clothing.
- If planting a garden, use raised beds with clean soil. Wash any

fruits or vegetables thoroughly with water.

- Ventilate your home using your furnace fan controls, to move and freshen air in your home.

We are committed to providing as much information as possible to residents regarding the potential health risks. Below are some answers to questions you may have.



What is the risk to the health of residents?

Much sampling has been completed on parcels X, Y and the Greenbelt site.

The environmental sampling has identified the presence of chemicals that are known to cause certain types of cancers, birth defects, or developmental delays when individuals are exposed to very high doses over a short period of time, or small doses over a longer period of time.

Testing in residential areas and human health risk assessments will be conducted to better determine the level of risk resulting from exposure to the substance or releases of the substance into the environment.

The main routes of exposure are through ingestion (through the mouth), inhalation (breathing), and dermal (absorption through the skin).



My kids have played in that soil, is their health at risk?

If children were walking or running through the area and not disturbing the soil, then any exposure is likely to be minimal.

If—during the course of playing—children ingested the soil (or, didn't wash their hands after playing in the soil), then the risk may increase.

The risk to children depends on how often children played in the areas where contamination has been identified (parcels X, Y and the Greenbelt site), or suspected (the berm on parcel C), the activity performed, and for how long.

If you are concerned about your child's health, then please visit your family physician, or call Health Link at 811.



Why has AHS issued the Executive Officer's Orders now?

AHS Environmental Public Health received the most recent testing data only recently, and it was this new data that indicated that the contaminants on parcels X, Y and the Greenbelt site pose a potential risk of harm to the health of people who may have accessed those sites.

While recent testing has not been conducted on the berm which runs at the southern end of Parcel C, there is some evidence to suggest that contaminated soil may have migrated to the berm.

As soon as AHS was aware of this, we issued the Executive Officer's Orders so that any further exposure is limited and corrective measures can be put in place as soon as possible.



Do I need to get tested? Who can I talk to, to get myself and my kids tested?

There should be no need to get tested, unless you experience specific symptoms and your family physician requests tests.

For further medical and health concerns you can consult with your family physician or call Health Link at 811.



Are there symptoms of contamination that I should be watching out for?

The presence, type, and number of symptoms, depend on the amount, duration, and frequency of exposure to the contaminated sites. If you are experiencing any specific symptoms that you find concerning, you can consult with your family physician or call Health Link at 811.



Is my water impacted? Have I been drinking or washing in contaminated water?

Edmonton's water supply comes from the North Saskatchewan River, not from groundwater wells. The risk of chemicals entering a home through distribution lines is very low.



Has gardening put me at risk?

The Government of Alberta is ordering testing and analysis of soil in residential communities near the contaminated site. While testing is being done, residents should take appropriate precautions.

The risk of exposure to pollutants while gardening comes mainly from accidentally ingesting soil or inhaling contaminated dust, either while gardening or after tracking it home on clothing and shoes. Precautions residents should take include

—but are not limited to—wearing gloves and washing hands after gardening and before eating, as well as not tracking dirt from the garden into the house. If these are followed, then risk of exposure is likely low.



I have eaten vegetables from my garden. Am I at risk?

Produce itself tends to be relatively safe, provided it wasn't grown in heavily contaminated soil and is washed before eating. Most food crops do not absorb contaminants, and what little they do absorb generally stays in the roots.

Remember to wash produce before storing or eating it, and to teach children to do so, too. Also, peel root crops, and remove outer leaves of leafy vegetables.



My kids go to school or daycare in that area. Are they at risk?

Going to school or playing outside daily would not present a significant increased risk.

To protect your health and the health of your family, it is important to stay off the site itself.



What is AHS doing next?

We will continue to work closely with our partners at the City of Edmonton, Alberta Environment and Parks and Alberta Health, and are committed to discussing any concerns related to the health risk with residents.

AHS will also work with the landowners to ensure they comply with the Executive Officer's Orders.

Our focus is twofold—working to limit any health risk presented by potential exposure to areas where sampling has identified contaminants; and, ensuring accurate and timely information related to the potential health risk is provided to residents.

➤ **More information is posted on the Alberta Environment and Parks website: <http://aep.alberta.ca/land/programs-and-services/reclamation-and-remediation/domtar/default.aspx>**

➤ **If you have any health concerns, please talk to your family physician or contact Health Link at 811**