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At Public Meeting, Black Leaf Residents Question Regulators About Clean-Up Plans

By [ERICA PETERSON](#) (@PEOPLE/ERICA-PETERSON)

Cleanup is scheduled to begin later this summer on 77 homes near the former Black Leaf Chemical site in Louisville, where testing has revealed widespread environmental contamination. At a public meeting tonight, residents were angry.

By all accounts, the former Black Leaf Chemical site in Louisville's Park Hill neighborhood is contaminated.

Regulators found high levels of pesticides, lead and arsenic in the soil on the site. Then more recently, testing in the private yards that back up to the plant revealed some contamination on 77 private properties.

Now, the state plans to remove the soil from those yards, and replace it with clean dirt and sod. Regulators called the public meeting yesterday to tell residents what to expect. The audience had lots of questions.

Denise Dickerson's yard was tested. It's contaminated. She says she wants to know what health problems living near poisoned soil for decades could have caused.

"My husband lived there," she said of her home on Wilson Avenue. "His mother raised 10 children. I'm now there. I've raised two. They're gone. I've got grandkids. I've had a lot of health issues within my family. Cancers. Cerebral palsy. I don't know if that is related to that."

Teresa Dickerson lives across the street from the plant. Her yard wasn't one of the ones tested, and she wants to know why. Especially because she assumes flooding in the area carried soil contaminants from one yard to the next.

"The street floods all the time!" she said. "I sit and watch it run down the alley. So my point is, to me, it sounds like y'all are just trying to snowball us. And that really tees me off."

Regulators say they could only test yards that directly touch the Black Leaf site, where contamination can more likely be linked to the plant. Researchers at the University of Louisville are also seeking grant funding to conduct blood tests on residents, so they can determine whether heavy metals and chemicals are in their blood.

The cleanup will likely start by early August.



http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wfpl/files/201306/black_leaf_1.jpg

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