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Environment

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EPA Finds Contamination in All Homes Tested Near Black Leaf Site

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

Soil testing in the yards

<http://www.wfpl.org/2012/02/15/epa-begins-soil-sampling-of-black-leaf-chemical-neighbors/> Of fifty homes bordering the former Black Leaf Chemical site in Louisville's Park Hill neighborhood has revealed levels of carcinogens in all of them. And nine of those homes had even higher levels of contamination.



<http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wfpl/files/black-leaf-150x150.jpg>

A sign on the fence surrounding the former Black Leaf Chemical site in Louisville's Park Hill neighborhood.

The [Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epaos.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=7247) found toxic contamination at the 29-acre Black Leaf site in 2010, but scientists weren't sure how far it had spread. Now, testing has revealed levels of heavy metals, pesticides and other toxic substances in 50 individual yards near the site. EPA On-Scene Coordinator Art Smith says all of the yards tested exceeded screening thresholds for at least one chemical.

“On the screening levels, it doesn't mean that cleanup is necessary or that health risks are imminent. It just highlights potential chemicals that may need further investigation,” he said.

But nine of the homes tested had even higher levels of contamination, and exceeded a higher threshold the agency calls the Removal Management Level. These homes showed high levels of either lead or benzo(a)pyrene. In high levels, [lead](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/) can cause intellectual development problems in children, and [benzo\(a\)pyrene](http://www.epa.gov/iris/subst/0136.htm) is a polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) and a probable human carcinogen.

Smith says it's too soon to say if the levels are dangerous for the homeowners or how—or whether—the EPA will remediate the areas.

“The exact plans for the cleanup have not been developed,” he said. “EPA is still negotiating with potentially responsible parties, and until the outcome of those negotiations have been reached, it would be premature to speculate on the actual cleanup plans and schedule for that.”

But the nine homes that exceeded the Removal Management Levels will likely be a higher priority. Smith says the agency will likely plan a meeting with homeowners soon, but he's waiting until the agency has more information about the options available.

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