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Environment

4:33 PM WED MARCH 6, 2013

More Contamination Found Near Black Leaf; At Least 69 Homes Affected

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

The Environmental Protection Agency has found more signs of toxic chemicals in properties near the former [Black Leaf Chemical](#) (http://www.epaosc.org/site/site_profile.aspx?site_id=7247) plant in Louisville's Park Hill neighborhood. This brings the total number of contaminated properties to at least 69.



[Enlarge image \(/sites/wfpl/files/2012/06/black%20leaf.jpg\)](#)

Credit Erica Peterson / WFPL

The EPA has known that there's contamination at the former Black Leaf chemical plant for two years. But it wasn't until last year that sampling revealed that toxics had [migrated to fifty-one nearby yards](#). (<http://wfpl.org/post/epa-finds-contamination-all-homes-tested-near-black-leaf-site>) And now, 18 more properties have shown signs of contamination.

The EPA [sampled the first group of homes in February 2012](#). (<http://archives.wfpl.org/2012/02/15/epa-begins-soil-sampling-of-black-leaf-chemical-neighbors/>) and then did some additional homes this past November. The sampling found a chemical called benzo(a)pyrene (BaP), a probable human carcinogen, in levels that exceed state standards. There were also higher-than normal levels of lead, and arsenic, DDT and dieldrin also showed up on some properties. In [a fact sheet the EPA sent out](#) (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/128962110/Black-Leaf-Chemical-Fact-Sheet-No-4-v-2>), the agency notes that there's a possibility that some of the BaP and lead could be due to fossil fuel combustion. For awhile, pesticides like DDT and dieldrin were also manufactured on site.

Carl Hilton is the director of the West Jefferson County Task Force. He says the site's neighbors are frustrated with the amount of information they've been given, and many have probably been exposed for a long time.

"Some of that stuff has been there for years, like some of the heavy metals and pesticides," he said. "Pesticides don't go away right away; they have a very long half-life."

This is especially a problem for residents who have vegetable gardens, and have been eating food grown in the toxic soil for years.

The EPA is currently working to see whether it can force the site's previous owners to

pay for the cleanup. An agency spokesman says regulators still aren't sure how the properties will be remediated, but there will be a public meeting in the near future to update residents.

[Here's the fact sheet the EPA released. \(http://www.scribd.com/doc/128962110/Black-Leaf-Chemical-Fact-Sheet-No-4-v2\)](http://www.scribd.com/doc/128962110/Black-Leaf-Chemical-Fact-Sheet-No-4-v2)

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