

## Lead Contamination in Soil

USA Today has published a follow-up article on their April 20, 2012, *USA Today* special investigative report about soil lead contamination in neighborhoods near 230 old lead-factory sites through-out the United States:

<http://usat.ly/ljyEtf> . The original article can be found at <http://usat.ly/HX5zr7>

One of the sites listed in the report is the A. Bercovich/Sunset Smelting and Refining Company, previously located at 1639 18<sup>th</sup> St. near Campbell St. in West Oakland. The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) lists the site history as a paint company and smelting and refining operation from 1912 to 1962, and a metal salvage business from 1963 to 1988. *USA Today's* test results found lead levels ranging from 19 parts per million (ppm) to 2268 ppm in the surrounding neighborhood. The EPA and State of California have set a standard of 400 ppm as a hazard in bare soil in children's play areas. These levels are dangerous especially to young children.

The **Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program** offers the following guidance:

- Too many areas of Alameda County have dangerous levels of lead in the soil due to industrial emissions, prior use of leaded gasoline, and lead-based paint.
- Many yards have lead contaminated soil near or next to pre-1978 homes.
- Anyone can be lead poisoned but young children and pregnant women are the most at risk.
- Most lead poisoning from lead in soil occurs when young children have direct contact with contaminated bare soil, and ingest it by putting their hands or toys in their mouth.
- There is no safe level of lead in the body.
- It is important to reduce exposures from all sources of lead.
- Lead poisoning can be prevented.

**We offer the following tips for people concerned about lead in soil:**

1. If you have children, take measures to reduce their exposure to contaminated soil by covering bare soil with a durable ground cover. For more tips go to: <http://www.aclppp.org/leadpoisoning/soil.htm>
2. If you grow food like vegetables, be aware that direct ingestion of soil is the biggest risk. Make sure you wash all produce before eating, don't plant near or next to pre-1978 painted structures, use raised beds with clean soil, cover pathways, don't track dirt inside, and provide safe play areas for children. For more tips on lead-safe gardening go to: <http://www.aclppp.org/leadpoisoning/gardening.htm>
3. The only way to know if you or your child has been exposed to lead is to have a blood lead test; **children under six should be tested for lead** especially when they are one and two years old, or whenever an exposure to lead is suspected.
4. You can access DTSC's list of hazardous waste and site clean-up information for your neighborhood at <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public>
5. Learn about common [sources of lead](#) poisoning such as dust from deteriorating lead-based paint in pre 1978 housing, contaminated soil, and some home remedies.
6. Call the Alameda County Lead Poisoning Prevention Program public information line for more information:

**510-567-8280**



[www.aclppp.org](http://www.aclppp.org)

