


Background from EPA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to closely review the issues raised in the *Wall Street Journal's* investigation of telecom cables that contain lead across the United States. Today, EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance sent letters to Verizon and AT&T legally requiring both companies to quickly provide EPA with key information relevant to our review, including results of inspections they've undertaken, as well as sampling results and data.

Additionally, EPA's Office of Land and Emergency Management and Regional offices are coordinating closely with partners at state environmental agencies to obtain and assess information about potential contamination at the sites identified in the articles, with a priority on evaluating areas with vulnerable communities and sites closely linked with children, such as schools and playgrounds. Over the coming weeks, EPA will conduct independent sampling starting at two locations: Coal Center, PA and West Orange, NJ, in coordination with the states. We are also in touch with the state of New York to review samples it has taken at Temple Park in Wappinger Falls, NY.

The science is clear: there is no known safe blood lead level, especially for our children. We take the issues raised in these articles very seriously and will move expeditiously under our statutory authorities.



Lead is a naturally occurring element and has been used in a wide variety of products, including paint, ceramics, pipes, plumbing materials, solders, gasoline, batteries, ammunition, and cosmetics. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in your body. Children six years old and younger are most susceptible to the effects of lead.

EPA's Work to Fight Lead Exposure

In October 2022, EPA developed the "Strategy to Reduce Lead Exposures and Disparities in U.S. Communities" to advance the agency's work to protect the public from lead exposure with a focus on environmental justice, which supports the Biden-Harris Administration's Executive Order on Advancing Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. Since children can be exposed to lead from multiple sources, the strategy outlines how EPA is using its full suite of authorities, expertise, and resources to reduce lead exposure in communities overburdened by pollution to advance the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to environmental justice and equity. EPA is focused on protecting children from lead exposure, especially those living in communities overburdened by pollution and other health and social stressors. Studies have shown that Superfund cleanups lowered the risk of elevated blood-lead levels for children living within 2 km (1.24 miles) of lead-contaminated sites by 8 to 18 percent.

Thanks to historic funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EPA has an unprecedented \$50 billion to invest in water infrastructure improvements – with \$15 billion dedicated to lead service line removal – in communities across the country.

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