



## Region 7

Iowa  
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## Fact Sheet

October 2003

### Questions & Answers About Indoor Dust Sampling by EPA Omaha Lead Site, Omaha, Nebraska

#### **INTRODUCTION**

EPA is asking a limited number of property owners to let the Agency collect dust samples from inside their houses to make sure that all sources of lead are considered. Sampling takes about one hour of a resident's time, taking samples from three to four rooms in the house. EPA has partnered with the University of Nebraska at Omaha to ask a series of questions during the sampling to better understand how daily household activities might be affected by lead. All EPA's efforts – past, present, and future – are to protect the children of Omaha at no cost to the homeowner. The data will be used to develop a risk assessment report available for public review.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Omaha Lead site includes surface soils at residential properties, child care facilities, schools, and similar properties in eastern Omaha, which is in Douglas County, Nebraska. The site covers 8,840 acres, with an estimated 65,615 residents.

The Omaha City Council asked EPA in 1998 to look into why there were more children with elevated levels of lead in their blood in east Omaha than anywhere else in Douglas County. EPA responded by using its authority under the Superfund law to begin an investigation. Much of the investigation has been sampling soil outside homes. EPA has tested the surface soils of 12,500 residential

properties, finding that about 40 percent had some lead contamination.

#### **QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT DUST SAMPLING**

**Q.** Why does EPA need to test the dust inside the house if all the lead is in the soil outside?

**A.** Young children are the most sensitive to lead contamination. There are many sources of lead in the environment, one of them being house dust. EPA wants to test house dust to see how much it contributes to children's lead exposure.

**Q.** Why would there be lead in house dust?

**A.** Lead comes from a variety of sources, including lead-based paint, lead pipes, and lead-contaminated soil resulting from industrial emissions, automobile exhausts and other sources. Soil tracked in from outside by people and pets can be a key contributor.

**Q.** Is the lead concentration in house dust the same as the concentration in yard soil?

**A.** Soil and dust lead concentrations are usually different from each other. Some lead in house dust may come from sources inside the house, such as lead-based paint.

**Q.** I don't have any children who are six years of age or younger, so why would EPA want to test the dust in my house?

**A.** EPA wants to understand the risks of lead contamination in Omaha. This requires EPA to look at many homes to get a representative sample of what the lead concentrations are in soil and house dust. Children may not live at the property now, but they could in the future. EPA is planning to collect dust samples from several hundred homes throughout the urban area east of 45th Street. The combined data will help EPA and the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services calculate a lead level that would protect human health in Omaha.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

EPA recommends that you contact the Douglas County Health Department at 402-444-7489 if you live in Douglas County and suspect that someone in your home has elevated blood lead levels. Free testing is available for any child between the ages of six months and six years.

### **EPA'S COMMITMENT TO OMAHA**

EPA is a committed partner that will inform, assist, and listen to the Omaha community so that we can collectively protect our most precious resource ... our children!

### **OTHER QUESTIONS**

Questions about this fact sheet or any lead-related activities in Omaha can be addressed to:

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