

Sampling Project is Next Step in Cleanup Process

ASARCO Taylor Springs Site

Taylor Springs, Illinois

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Want to learn more?

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You may also call the EPA toll-free at 800-621-8431, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., weekdays.

Information repository

Documents about this project are available at the site information repository at the Taylor Springs Village Hall, 626 E. Main St.

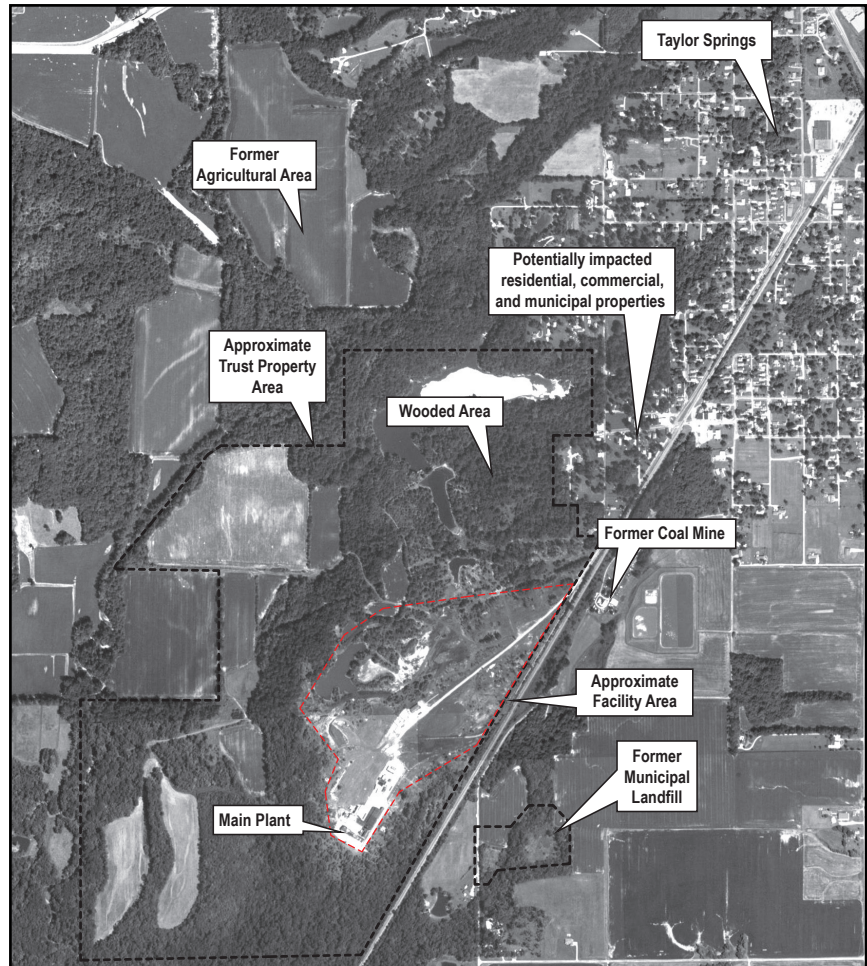
On the web:

www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/asarcots

What is a Superfund:

Superfund is the environmental cleanup program legally known as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, a federal law enacted in 1980. CERCLA authorizes the federal government to force those responsible for hazardous waste sites to clean them up.

The ASARCO Superfund site is in what EPA calls the “remedial investigation” phase. This study will help EPA develop cleanup options. The Agency will then determine the feasibility of these options, and ultimately adopt a cleanup plan that is efficient and cost-effective.



Aerial view of Taylor Springs and the ASARCO site.

Work begins this month on a thorough study of the ASARCO Taylor Springs Superfund site. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will supervise contractors taking soil, water and air samples for study.

Local residents can expect to see technicians in required protective clothing taking:

- Soil samples near the ASARCO facility and in some residential areas near the site.
- Sediment and surface water samples from the Middle Fork of Shoal Creek and lakes on the site, as well as drainage areas and tributaries.
- Ground water samples from 14 existing monitoring wells and six additional wells to be installed on the site.
- Air quality samples.
- Samples of fish and of plants and animals that may have been affected by contaminants at the site.

What are the health concerns?

The EPA will use results from the sampling project to evaluate risks to people and the environment from contamination at the site. Potential health effects come primarily from four metals: lead, arsenic, cadmium and zinc.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that can cause a range of health effects from behavioral problems and learning disabilities to seizures and death. Children 6 and under are most at risk because their bodies are growing quickly. Children often have higher levels of exposure because they play in dirt and may put dirty hands in their mouths or, in some cases, eat dirt.

Arsenic is found throughout the environment. For most people, food is the major source of exposure. Long-term exposure has been associated with cancer, and the EPA has classified arsenic as a human carcinogen.

Cadmium can accumulate in the renal system and lead to kidney failure. Airborne cadmium is most easily taken up by the body and can cause lung problems. The main sources of cadmium in the air are the burning of fossil fuels such as coal or oil and burning of municipal waste. Cadmium has been classified as a probable human carcinogen.

Zinc is primarily an environmental hazard and can be toxic to plants and animals, particularly aquatic animals. At relatively high concentrations, zinc can cause respiratory and skin issues in humans.

Site history and background

The ASARCO site is nearly 533 acres southwest of the village of Taylor Springs. It is now owned by the ASARCO Multi-State Custodial Trust, and includes a former zinc smelter and zinc oxide plant. About 263 acres are wooded and 89 acres were formerly farmed.

The zinc smelter and zinc oxide facilities were developed by American Zinc Lead and Smelting Co., now Blue Tee Corp., starting in 1912. ASARCO bought the facility in 1971. Midwest-Zinc Hillsboro leased the French Process zinc oxide facility from ASARCO in 1994 and operated it until 2004.

About 100 acres of the facility area is covered with residue from the former zinc smelting and zinc oxide operations. The residue includes zinc slag, plant cinder wastes, calcine clinker, sinter clinker and coal. The primary contaminants are arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, copper, lead, nickel and zinc.

Prior to 1971

The site was owned by American Zinc Lead and Smelting Company and produced zinc, sulfuric acid and slag--a byproduct of the smelting process--which was piled as waste around the site.

2001

Contaminated soil was first identified by the Illinois EPA in 2001 through a site investigation and soil testing. The EPA sampled residential yards to determine extent of contamination.

2007

An emergency cleanup was conducted at 36 properties removing and disposing of 2,800 cubic yards of soil.

2011

A site investigation plan was finalized for the site and residential properties around the ASARCO site. The first phase of soil, ground water, and air sampling is set to begin in October.

1971

ASARCO purchased the property. Midwest Zinc leased the zinc oxide production from ASARCO from 1994-2004.

2006

The EPA added the ASARCO Taylor Springs site to the National Priorities List of Superfund hazardous waste sites. The EPA and Illinois EPA oversaw the investigation of 150 residential properties around the ASARCO facility, sampling soil and groundwater for lead and other metals. 87 residential or public areas were found to exceed EPA's standards for lead.

2008

Restoration of cleaned up residential properties, including re-vegetation, was completed.

2012

Additional soil, ground water and air sampling will be completed in June (estimated).

