

## FACT SHEET

### Background

- The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) recently completed an assessment of soil in the North Bottoms neighborhood near the former Northwestern Metal facility, near the UNL city campus.
- Surface soil samples were analyzed from 20 residential yards and on nearby UNL property.
- Lead was detected in 9 of 20 residential yards at concentrations exceeding levels used to determine whether a site needs further investigation.
- The U.S. EPA recommends further investigation in residential soil if the soil lead level exceeds 400 milligrams of lead per kilogram of soil (400 parts per million [ppm]).

### Lead Exposure

- Children under 7 years of age and fetuses are the most susceptible to the negative effects of lead due to their developing nervous system.
- Young children are more likely to play in dirt and to place their hands, toys, and other objects in their mouths, incidentally ingesting soil and potential contaminants in soil.
- Lead is more readily absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract in children, and nutritional deficiencies, such as iron or calcium, may increase this absorption.

### DHHS Recommendations to Reduce Exposure to Lead in Soil

- Small children under 7 years of age and pregnant women should avoid contact with bare soil areas.
- Bare soil areas in the yard should be covered with grass, mulch, gravel, sand, or other landscaping material to prevent direct contact with soil. Special attention should be paid to playground areas.
- Adults and children should wash their hands prior to eating.
- Shoes that come into contact with bare soil should be removed prior to entering the home. Shoes should remain outdoors or in a garage to avoid tracking soil into the home.
- Home gardens and play areas should not be located within 3-feet of a home's foundation for homes built prior to 1978, due to potential exposure to lead-based paint contaminated soil.
- Homegrown produce should be washed thoroughly prior to ingestion.

### Next Steps

- Contact Deb Myers (DEQ) at 402-471-2988 for questions about the soil sampling or Sue Dempsey (DHHS) at 402-471-8880 or [www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead) for questions about exposure to lead in soil.
- Contact your physician if you have any health concerns. If you do not have a physician or need help accessing a doctor's appointment for your child, call 402-441-8065 (Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department).
- A public information session will be held on June 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:00-8:00 PM at the Welfare Society Inc. – Hall at 1430 North 10<sup>th</sup> Street, to address questions that North Bottoms residents may have about the soil sampling and about reducing exposure to lead in soil.
- NDEQ will be working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to determine further sampling and actions to be taken.