

Lead Contaminated Soil/Residential Sites: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Lowers Recommended Screening Levels



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The United States Environmental Protection Agency (“EPA”) announced that it is lowering recommended screening levels for assessing and remediating lead-contaminated soil in residential areas.

The recommended screening levels for lead-contaminated soil in residential areas are lowered to 200 parts per million (“ppm”) and 100 ppm when additional sources of lead are identified.

The Association of State and Territorial Waste Management Officials noted that this is the first time in 30 years that EPA has lowered the screening levels for lead-contaminated soil.

The new screening levels are addressed in a January 17th memorandum from EPA Office of Land and Emergency Management Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator Barry N. Breen to the EPA Regional Administrators. The memorandum is titled:

Updated Residential Soil Lead Guidance for CERCLA Sites and RCRA Corrective Action Facilities (“Memorandum”)

EPA typically describes soil screening levels as a guidance tool whose purpose is to standardize and accelerate the evaluation and cleanup of contaminated soils. Screening levels guidance are not generally national cleanup standards. In other words, they do not alone necessarily trigger the need for responsive actions or define unacceptable levels of contaminants in soil. Instead, “screening” often refers to the process of identifying and defining areas, contaminants, and conditions at a site that do not require further attention.

The EPA *Memorandum* addresses:

- Best Available Science and Data citing:
- National Toxicology Program Monograph on Health Effects of Low-Level Lead
- Integrated Science Assessment for Lead
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry’s 2020 Toxicological Profile for Lead
- Rationale for Updated Screen Levels/Guidance noting:
- Evolving science on lead demonstrates additional adverse impacts of lead exposure well below 10 µg/dL since the 1994 guidance was issued
- Children can be exposed to multiple sources of lead other than contaminated soil/dust (e.g., lead water service lines, lead-based paint, or non-attainment areas where the air lead concentrations exceed the National Ambient Air Quality Standards)

- Childhood, race and ethnicity, proximity to lead sources, residential factors (housing age), and poor nutrition may lead to increased risk of lead-related health effects
- Lowering the screening levels is expected to increase the number of residential properties evaluated for potential cleanup under CERCLA and RCRA corrective action authorities
- Implementation
- Managing and Prioritizing Residential Soil Lead Cleanups
- Integration of Removal and remedial Authorities at Residential Lead Sites
- Collaboration at Superfund Residential Lead Sites
- Developing PRGs and Cleanup Levels for Residential Lead Sites
- Relationship to Toxic Substances Control Act §403 Hazard Standards
- Applicability to Superfund Site Assessment and Listing

A copy of the *Memorandum* can be downloaded [here](#).