1410 N Hilton Street
Boise, ID 83706 • (208) 373-0502

Brad Little, Governor
Jess Byrne, Director

July 15, 2024

NOTICE: UPCOMING DUST SUPPRESSION AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING

On July 22-23 2024, a dust suppressant will be applied to the Gilmore townsite rights-of-way. The suppressant, magnesium chloride, is typically used as a temporary measure to mitigate dust caused by wind and vehicle traffic on dirt and gravel. A similar application was made in August 2023 and May 2024. At the Gilmore townsite, dust coming from the rights-of-way contains harmful contamination of lead and other metals. These applications are funded and directed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

What is an EPA Removal Action?

An EPA Removal Action is quick response to a threat from hazardous substances. Typical situations requiring Removal Actions include chemical fires or explosions, contamination of drinking water supplies, or threats to people from hazardous substance exposure. Removal Actions are directed and funded by the EPA, while state agencies serve in supporting roles. At Gilmore, the EPA is coordinating a Removal Action with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to apply magnesium chloride dust suppressant before increased seasonal use. Although called a Removal Action, no contaminated soil is being removed from the Gilmore rights-of-way. Magnesium chloride is applied as a temporary measure to suppress contaminated dust.

Why focus effort on the townsite rights-of-way?

Dust created by vehicle traffic in the Gilmore townsite is not just a nuisance – it contains high levels of lead and other hazardous metals which can be harmful to human health if inhaled or ingested.

What is magnesium chloride?

Magnesium chloride, sometimes referred to as “mag chloride”, is a saltwater solution used to suppress dust coming from dirt and gravel. Magnesium chloride salt is *hygroscopic,* which means it naturally attracts small amounts of water from the air. When applied to dirt and gravel, this characteristic results in conditions on dirt and gravel that are more damp and therefore less dusty. Applications of magnesium chloride can benefit from higher soil moisture usually found during springtime. However, length of effectiveness is very dependent on the soil type, amount of traffic, and other environmental conditions.

A tanker truck traveling south on Quartzite Avenue at the Gilmore townsite sprays water on the rights-of-way prior to applying magnesium chloride. Photo credit: Kevin Kostka, August 17, 2023

What caused lead contamination at Gilmore?

Lead and other hazardous metals contamination is the result of historic large-scale hard rock mining operations. The mines at Gilmore predominantly produced lead and silver ore, which was transported off the mountain through the townsite via wagons, tramway, and railroad. In some instances, mine waste containing lead and other hazardous metals was used to build-up land and repair rights-of-way areas within the townsite. More than a century of wind and water erosion also spread these contaminants throughout the area.

Why is lead contamination a concern?

Lead is toxic. It can be harmful to anyone, but it is most dangerous for young children, pregnant women, and women of childbearing age. Lead exposure can negatively affect a child's brain development, and its effects may be permanent. In adults, elevated lead exposures can damage the body's internal organs or increase blood pressure. Lead poisoning can occur with no obvious signs or symptoms. There is no safe blood level of lead – if you reside or recreate frequently at Gilmore, it's recommended you talk with your health care provider about getting a blood lead test.

To learn more about the harmful effects of lead exposure, join DEQ and Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) staff at the Leadore Community Center on Monday, May 20th, at 10:00 AM.

Reduce exposure to lead and other metals at the Gilmore townsite.

When children are present Do not allow children to dig or play in the dirt (e.g., bare soil, muddy areas, mine waste piles). Avoid interaction with dirty, dusty pets.

When staying Avoid tracking dirt inside by removing shoes and dusty clothing before entering.

When recreating Go slowly. Do not create dust. Follow others at a safe riding distance. Avoid breathing dust.

There is no safe blood level of lead.

Visit www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/lead-poisoning for information on the impacts of lead poisoning.

Where can I find more information?

Past assessments, sampling data, and other reports, can be found at www.deq.idaho.gov/gilmore.

For additional information about the upcoming dust suppression or meeting, contact DEQ or EPA staff:

Department of Environmental Quality Dean Ehlert
Waste Management and Remediation Division – State Office
(208) 373.0416
Dean.Ehlert@deq.idaho.gov

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Eric Vanderboom
On-scene Coordinator
Idaho Operations Office
(208) 530.3180
Vanderboom.Eric@epa.gov

Department of Environmental Quality
Troy Saffle
Regional Administrator
Idaho Falls Regional Office
(208) 528.2661
Troy.Saffle@deq.idaho.gov