

## Questions and Answers about the Longfellow School

This flyer was written to give you information about the contaminants found onsite at Longfellow School grounds. The CT Departments of Public Health and Environmental Protection and the City of Bridgeport are providing you with information about the clean-up activities that will begin soon. For more information, please contact us at the numbers given below. **There will be two community meetings to answer questions about the information contained in this flyer: Thursday November 3<sup>rd</sup> and Wednesday November 9<sup>th</sup> at 6pm at Longfellow School.**

### Background

Longfellow School property (as well as the adjacent park) were built in an area that used to be water. The land was filled in and in 1962, the school was built. In the past, when coal and wood were the primary heating sources, it was common to use coal ash and wood ash as fill materials to raise the elevation of low-lying areas. Furthermore, an incineration plant known as the “Bostwick Incineration Plant” was located in this neighborhood and ash from the plant is known to have been deposited throughout this area. Because it was likely that ash from the incineration plant could have been used locally as fill material, soil testing was recommended at the Longfellow School site before the school is renovated next year.



### What contaminants were found in the soil? What are these chemicals?

**Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs)** are a group of over 100 different chemicals that are formed during the incomplete burning of coal, oil and gas, garbage and other organic things like tobacco or meat.

**Petroleum hydrocarbons (ETPH)** is a mixture of chemicals called hydrocarbons. These compounds come from crude oil used to make petroleum products. Everyone is exposed to TPH from many sources including gasoline pumps, spilled oil on pavement, and chemicals used at home or work.

**Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** have been used as coolants and lubricants in transformers and electrical equipment because they do not burn easily and are good insulators. Use of PCBs was stopped in the US in 1977 because they build up in the environment.

**Lead** is a naturally occurring metal used to make batteries, ammunition, and metal products. In the past, lead was present in many paint and ceramic products, but that use has decreased. Years ago, lead was present as an additive in gasoline. Lead is found naturally at low levels in soil almost everywhere.

**Arsenic** is a naturally-occurring element found in soil almost everywhere. Inorganic arsenic compounds have been used to make pressure treated lumber but is no longer used in wood used in homes. Organic arsenic compounds are used in pesticides in cotton fields and orchards.

## How could I get exposed to the contaminants?

In order to be exposed, you need to have direct contact with the contaminated soil and the contaminated soil needs to get into your body. Touching the soil, breathing soil dust, or eating the soil (putting items into your mouth that have soil on them – such as fingers or food) are possible ways to get contaminated soil into your body.

## Is exposure harmful?

Any chemical that enters your body can be harmful if you take in too much. Whether your health will be harmed depends on several factors:

- How much of the chemical you take into the body;
- How long you are exposed to it;
- How it enters the body (for example, through eating, drinking, breathing or touching);
- Your age, general health, and other individual factors that determine how at risk you are to harmful health effects;
- Other exposures you have to the same or similar substances; and
- How toxic the chemical is.

## What are the possible health effects of these chemicals?

The paragraphs below summarize what we know about the health effects from exposure to PAHs, PCBs, ETPH, lead and arsenic. Based on the test results from the soil around Longfellow school **we do not believe that contaminant levels are high enough at Longfellow school grounds to cause the harmful health effects described below.**

- PAH exposure at high levels have been linked to cancer and birth defects in laboratory animals.
- ETPH compounds can affect your nervous system, causing headaches and dizziness.
- PCB exposure has been linked to acne-like skin conditions in adults and neurobehavioral and immunological changes in children. It has also been shown to cause cancer in animals.
- Lead can harm the nervous system, particularly in children. Lead can cause children to be born prematurely and have lower birth weights. Lead can also affect a child's mental and physical growth. Exposure to high levels of lead can affect the brain and kidneys of adults and children. Lead has not been shown to cause cancer in people.
- Arsenic exposure at high levels can cause death. At low levels over a long time arsenic exposure can cause discoloration of the skin, appearance of small corns or warts. Arsenic is known to cause cancer in people.

## Could I be harmed from past exposure?

**The short answer is: We don't know for sure.**

Evaluating past exposures is very difficult. Here is what we do know: There are PAH, PCB, ETPH, lead and arsenic present in the soil surrounding Longfellow School. Some of the locations that were tested have contaminant levels in surface soil that are greater than our state cleanup standards for residences. There is one

small location with high levels of ETPH which appears to have been caused from leaking oil (possibly from a vehicle). This area has already been cleaned up. As stated above, it is important to remember that in order to be exposed, you need to have direct contact with contaminated soil and the contaminated soil needs to get into your body. Most of the school property has good grass cover, which greatly reduces the chance for direct contact with soil.

### **What activities will happen? How long will it take?**

Our first actions are to ensure that contact with soil around the property is prevented. Access to soil on the school property will be limited by fencing. The fire department has ensured that there are adequate entrance and exit points to the property. If there is still accessible soil near pathways in and out of the school, materials such as crushed stone or pavement will be placed over the ground to prevent soil contact.

During the construction phase – the entire property will be “capped”. This means that the bad soils will be covered with asphalt, new building, or by removing contaminated soil, placing a buried fabric beneath over the remaining soil and placing new clean soil over the surface.

### **What things will I see during the cleanup?**



Fencing will be going up. Cleanup workers will wear protective clothing such as white suits, respirators, hard hats, gloves and boots. This protection is required by law because cleanup workers may come into direct repeated contact with contaminated materials. You may also see truck and other vehicles at the property. You may see equipment for checking the air quality to make sure the contaminants are not blowing off the site.

### **How will we be protected during the cleanup and construction?**

First, we will ensure that only people who are supposed to be on the property during the cleanup can enter. The City, working with its contractors and with oversight from DEEP will also make sure that the neighborhood is safe by:

- Checking the air to make sure that air quality is safe for nearby community and the workers.
- Wetting down the soil being removed to keep dust levels low. If contamination is detected in the air, workers will stop work if needed to correct the problem.
- Cleaning contaminated soil off the truck tires before they drive through the neighborhood and ensuring that trucks are covered.
- Keeping trucks from parking on the street.
- Truck drivers will respect the 3 minutes idling law.

## **For more information:**

### ***Health Questions***

CT Department of Public Health  
Meg Harvey  
(860) 509-7740  
<http://www.ct.gov/dph>

Bridgeport Dept of Health and Social Services  
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### ***School Construction Questions***

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### ***Environmental Questions***

CT Department of Energy and Environmental  
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Ron Curran  
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