

Neighborhood Bulletin

News of Asarco's Residential Soils Remediation Project

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Ruston/North Tacoma

December 1995

The Neighborhood Bulletin is produced by ASARCO Incorporated, under the direction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to keep Ruston and North Tacoma neighbors up-to-date on efforts to meet the EPA's requirements for "residential soils remediation." Hydrometrics, an environmental consulting firm and contractor, is testing yard soils for arsenic and lead at homes surrounding the former smelter. Where those metals are above the soil-removal levels of 230 parts per million (ppm) of arsenic and 500 ppm of lead, workers are replacing soils up to 18 inches deep. Asarco is paying for all of these activities.

SOIL SAMPLING CONTINUES

By December 1, 1995, 400 properties this year will have been tested for arsenic and lead as part of Asarco's residential soils remediation project.

"With the 330 properties in Zone 1 sampled in 1994, this brings the total number of yards sampled to date to 730," explained Karen Pickett, Asarco Information Center Coordinator. "Sampling will continue throughout 1996, and overall, we expect to be completed with soil sampling in the required area by early 1997."

Yards are being sampled as part of Asarco's continuing obligation to meet the EPA's requirements for "residential soils remediation." Asarco is working in conjunction with Hydrometrics, an environmental consulting firm and contractor, testing for arsenic and lead in yard soils at homes surrounding the former smelter. Only when tests show those metals are above the soil-removal levels of 230 parts per million (ppm) of arsenic and 500 ppm of lead, the property will be scheduled for replacement.

Up to 20 soil samples are taken from various locations in each yard, down to a depth of 18 inches. Sampling takes about a day, and residents generally receive test results within four weeks. To find out when your yard is scheduled for testing, call the Asarco Information Center at 756-5436.

PACE PROVIDES PREVENTION EDUCATION AND TESTING

The Community Protection Measures Program (CPM) has been changed to PACE (Program for Area Cleanup Education). This re-naming more accurately reflects the primary objective of the program, which is to provide education to the Ruston/North Tacoma community regarding soil handling issues.

"PACE can help people understand the steps they can take to minimize their potential risk of exposure to metals that may be in their soil by making accurate information available to both future and current area residents," explained Theresa NeSmith, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Environmental Health Specialist and PACE Coordinator.

This re-naming was a result of meetings with various citizen's groups, local residents, and the CPM Workgroup (now PACE Workgroup), with representatives from the Washington State Department of Ecology, the United States Environmental Protection Agency, the Town of Ruston, Asarco, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, and citizen representatives.

The PACE Workgroup has developed educational brochures addressing issues including soil handling, new lawn care for remediated yards, and general information regarding the Ruston/North Tacoma area. These brochures are available at the Asarco Information Center.

In addition, the Workgroup is currently developing a self-service, property-specific database, to provide current and future property owners, real estate agents, utility workers, and interested citizens with information about area properties. This database will include information on soil sample test results and yard replacement activities, and is available at the Asarco Information Center.

If you have any questions about PACE, contact Theresa NeSmith, with the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, at 597-3455.

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YARD REPLACEMENT Q & A

Q: How many yards were replaced this year?

A: Asarco has replaced soil from 125 properties in 1995.

Q: What are the plans for yard replacements in 1996?

A: Yard replacements will begin in mid-April 1996. An additional 125 properties are scheduled for replacement in 1996.

Q: How will I know when my yard will be scheduled for remediation?

A: First your yard must be tested. Yards are scheduled for replacement only if the soil sampling results indicate replacement is required. Testing and remediation schedules are available at the Asarco Information Center.

Q: When will I know if my yard will be replaced in 1996?

A: Households due to have their yards replaced in 1996 will be notified in the mail before the end of 1995.

Q: If my yard is scheduled for replacement, what can I expect?

A: Workers will replace up to 18 inches of soil, leaving most fences, large trees, and shrubs in place. The process takes crews approximately 10 weekdays per yard, working 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Driveways or sidewalks remain in place and any damage that occurs as a result of the remediation will be repaired.

INFORMATION CENTER HOURS

The Asarco Information Center is open Sunday through Thursday afternoons from 1 - 5 p.m. at 5311 N. Commercial Street in Ruston. Displays of the new master development plan for the former smelter property are now posted, and information on all the Asarco projects is available. Information Center Coordinator Karen Pickett may be reached by calling 756-5436 or 1-800-750-5436.

