

# Neighborhood Bulletin

News of Asarco's Residential Soils Remediation Project

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Ruston/North Tacoma

June 1994

*The Neighborhood Bulletin is produced by ASARCO Incorporated, under the direction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 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 these 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.*

## YARD REPLACEMENTS UNDER WAY

In April, the spotlight was on Jan Lassen's yard on 49th Street in Ruston. The soils in her yard were the first to be replaced under the EPA's plan for removing soils in Ruston and North Tacoma containing arsenic or lead above soil removal levels.

Jan's yard was featured on television and radio news and in several newspapers. As reporters and photographers recorded the event, Hydrometrics removed the top 12 inches of soil, carefully maneuvering around a camellia bush and tool shed. Clean fill dirt and topsoil were then put in place and topped with a new lawn. Hydrometrics worked with her to replace some roses that could not be saved.

"The workers were great. They were very easy to work with," Jan said.

Hydrometrics' trucks are a familiar sight on Ruston and North Tacoma streets now as the yard replacements are becoming routine. Three to four yards a week are being replaced.

## SOIL SAMPLING CONTINUES

Hydrometrics is continuing its sampling of yard soils. (See map on other side.) The samples are tested to show the level of arsenic and lead that may be present and to determine which yards require soils removal and to what depth.

Before sampling a yard, Hydrometrics and Asarco ask permission of the property owner and agree to a schedule, according to Willie Williams, construction engineer supervising the work. "We review the details with people in advance, so it's not necessary for them to be at home during the work," Willie explained.

A typical yard is divided into six sections for sampling. Within each section, samples are collected at four different depths. After several weeks, Asarco sends a letter to the property owner with the test results indicating whether further action is necessary.

New laboratory equipment was recently installed at the Hydrometrics office on 49th Street in Ruston. Up to now, samples have been sent to Helena, Montana, for processing.

If you would like to find out when your property is scheduled for sampling, visit or call the Asarco Information Center, 756-5436.

## REPLACEMENT TAKES DETAILED PLANNING

If the results of your yard test show arsenic or lead above the soil removal level, Asarco will meet with you to discuss replacing your yard soils, according to Tom Aldrich, Asarco site manager. Once you have had your questions answered and have given your permission for work to proceed, Asarco will have Hydrometrics prepare a detailed map of your property. A Hydrometrics representative will review the map with you, explaining in detail the work to be done, and will schedule the project.

When work is complete, Hydrometrics will meet with you again to assure that work was performed as planned.

"Sod, trees, and shrubs that die within one year as a result of the soil excavation project will be replaced by Asarco," Tom said. "Our goal is to get the job done right and minimize inconvenience to residents."

ASARCO Incorporated, Inc.

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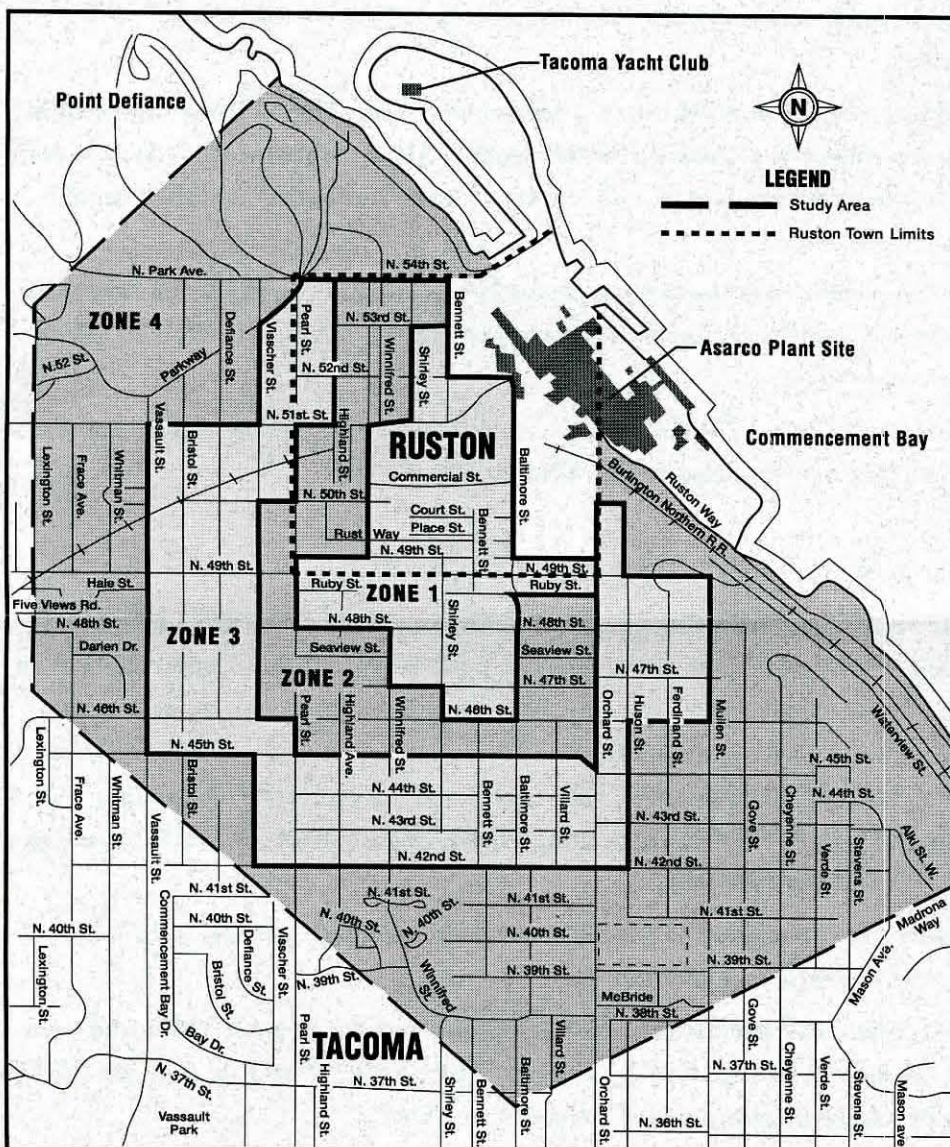
## Theresa NeSmith Offers Practical Advice

As resident environmental health specialist, it is Theresa NeSmith's job to help neighbors in Ruston and North Tacoma keep good health in mind. "I want people to be attentive, but not alarmed," explained Theresa, an employee of the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. "We know that some of the soils contain arsenic and lead, and we know that not every inch of soil will be removed. My job is to help people minimize their health risk and put it into perspective."

From her office in the Asarco Information Center, Theresa offers some practical advice. "Most important is that we don't want kids to eat the dirt. Wash your hands before you eat. This is something we all should be doing anyway."

Theresa also recommends washing garden vegetables, vacuuming and dusting regularly, and keeping away from soils that may be stirred up when yards are being replaced.

Theresa would like local residents to participate in developing a "community protection measures" program to minimize possible health risks today and in the future. If you would like to participate as a member of this citizens work group, call Theresa at 597-3455.



## SOIL SAMPLING SCHEDULE

Zone 1 sampling began:  
Fall 1993

Zone 2 sampling begins:  
Fall 1994

Zone 3 sampling begins:  
Fall 1995

Zone 4 sampling begins:  
Fall 1996

## INFORMATION CENTER OPEN WEEKDAYS

The Asarco Information Center is open weekdays 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 5311 North Commercial Street in Ruston. Information Center Coordinator Karen Pickett is also available by phone at 756-5436.

