

Appendix 3: 2009 Information Sheet



Environmental Health Information



Excelsior Parkland

May 2009

Background

Excelsior Parkland is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Oak Street and Beehrle Avenue in Excelsior, Minnesota. The park is about three acres in size, and has a walking path, gazebo, pond, and community gardens. The site was a unpermitted dump in the 1950s and 1960s before the City of Excelsior obtained it.

While the dump has been covered with clean soil, the cover is not adequate and wastes are exposed along the shore of a pond on the south side of the park. The City of Excelsior is working with Hennepin County, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to ensure the site is properly covered and potential health risks are addressed.

What contamination has been found at the site?

Much of the waste dumped at the site appears to have been burned, which was a common practice at the time. Contaminants commonly linked with burned wastes, such as polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), heavy metals such as arsenic and lead, and dioxins/furans have been detected in the waste materials and to a much lesser extent in the surface soils. Methane gas has also been detected in the soil.

Additional soil samples were collected in the western end of the park, which is rented out as community gardens, because people are likely to have more contact with the soil while gardening. The results showed that levels of heavy metals and PAHs were slightly elevated in some surface soil samples. Higher levels were found in the waste materials, four feet or more below the ground.

What cleanup is planned for the site?

The City of Excelsior, using grant funding from Hennepin County, will be taking several steps in 2009 to address the contamination at the site. First, a trench will be dug and a venting system installed to safely vent methane gas. In the fall, the City plans to bring in additional clean soil to provide a thicker cover over the waste materials. Access to the park and community garden may be restricted for a short time during cleanup activities.

Is the community garden area safe to use now?

Levels of contaminants in the community garden were low. MDH believes that the health benefits of a community garden (outdoor physical activity and consuming fresh, locally grown produce) outweigh any possible health risks associated with using the garden for the 2009 growing season.



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What can you do to prevent or reduce contact with contaminants in the soil?

There are steps that park users and gardeners can take this summer (2009) to reduce accidental swallowing of even slightly contaminated soil. Accidental swallowing is more likely to happen when soil is left on fingers and hands or on produce. Children are more likely to have contact with the soil. Preschool-age children are even more likely to be exposed because they often put their hands in their mouths. Contaminated soil can also be tracked into the house on shoes and can end up on indoor surfaces and toys. Once additional clean soil is put on the dump, these precautions will no longer be needed.

- Adults should wash their hands before feeding their children, smoking, eating or drinking. Water is available at the garden that can be used for this purpose.
- Wash children's hands and faces, especially before eating and bedtime. Keep fingernails short and clean. Clean any toys brought to the park/garden that children may put in their mouths.
- Take off your garden shoes when you enter your home to prevent tracking contaminated soil inside. Store outdoor/garden shoes at entryways. Remember that pets can carry in soil dust on their paws.
- Use gardening gloves (leather is better than cloth) when gardening to keep contaminated dust out from under fingernails and reduce the chance that soil on fingers and hands could be swallowed.
- Keep garden tools and gloves in one area of the garage or shed.
- Periodically rinse tools off.
- Don't smoke or eat while gardening.
- Thoroughly wash and peel all vegetables and produce before eating or cooking them.

For more information, or if you have questions, please contact:

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For more information contact:

MDH/Site Assessment and Consultation: (651) 201-4897 or 1 (800) 657-3908, press "4" and leave a message.

To request this document in another format, call (651) 201-5000 or TDD: (651) 201-5797.

This information sheet was prepared with partial support from the federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). This statement does not imply that ATSDR has endorsed this information sheet.