



Questions and Answer Fact Sheet for Study Area Bounded by Pyrex Street, E. Pulteney Street, Post Creek and Chemung River City of Corning, Steuben County June 2014

Background:

Corning Incorporated will soon begin an environmental investigation to characterize the nature and extent of fill that may contain ash, glass and brick in the Study Area. The Study Area is located in the northeastern area of the City of Corning. It is bounded by Pyrex Street to the west, the Chemung River to the south, Post Creek to the east, and E. Pulteney Street to the north. The presence of the fill was identified during construction work at Corning-Painted Post East High School. Some of the fill excavated at the school property contained hazardous levels of lead, which required special handling and disposal. Three out of 220 samples that were collected to characterize the soils for disposal also tested hazardous for cadmium. In addition to lead and cadmium, much of the fill contains other metals such as arsenic, barium, chromium, and mercury at levels that warrant additional characterization but did not exceed levels considered to be “hazardous waste” as defined below. NYSDEC determined the presence of this material warrants additional investigation at the school property and in nearby properties within the Study Area. NYSDEC asked Corning Incorporated to conduct an evaluation and Corning Incorporated has entered into an order with NYSDEC to do so.

What does “hazardous waste” mean?

Hazardous waste is waste that poses substantial or potential threats to public health or the environment. The treatment, storage and disposal of hazardous waste are regulated under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) of 1976. Hazardous wastes are defined under RCRA in 40 CFR 261 where they are divided into two major categories: characteristic wastes and listed wastes. Characteristic hazardous wastes are materials that are known or tested to exhibit one or more of the following four hazardous traits: ignitability, reactivity, corrosivity, or toxicity. Listed hazardous wastes do not apply to this site. The hazardous waste identified at the school property consists of fill that tested hazardous for toxicity via a testing procedure known as the Toxicity Characteristic Leaching Procedure (TCLP). TCLP is a soil sample extraction method for chemical analysis employed to simulate leaching through a landfill and to determine whether the soil contamination has the potential to impact groundwater.

How will this impact students and staff at Corning-Painted Post East High School?

During the ongoing construction work at Corning-Painted Post East High school, measures have been taken to prevent the migration of construction dust into the indoor air of the occupied areas of the school. Indoor air dust monitoring conducted during the construction work has not identified concerns to date. The construction work is expected to be complete this summer and only very limited additional removal of fill soil associated with fencing for athletic fields is anticipated. Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure exposure does not occur during additional construction activities. Provided that students and staff adhere to rules preventing them from entering the work zones, the risk for exposure to contaminants in fill soil is minimal.

What does this mean for Study Area residents?

We currently do not have enough information to determine whether there is any fill material in the residential area, or if it does exist, whether it represents an exposure concern for people in the Study Area. Once the nature and extent of this fill is defined, the results will be communicated to property owners and to the public, and appropriate measures will be recommended to address any elevated levels of contaminants that are found. However, in the interim, there are things people can do (described below) if they are concerned that contaminated fill may be present on their property.

What is lead?

Lead is a metal that was once widely used in gasoline and paint. Lead was also released from mining lead and other metals, and from factories that make or use lead, lead alloys and lead compounds. Therefore, it can be found in soil and dust. Lead was also historically used in the manufacture of certain glass products by Corning Incorporated. Of the 220 samples collected for waste characterization of the fill soils at the school property, 65 tested hazardous for lead.

What about the other metals in the fill?

In addition to lead, other metals identified in fill soils excavated from the school property warrant additional characterization. Of the 220 samples collected for waste characterization of the fill soils at the school property, three tested hazardous for cadmium. The significance of the hazardous detections of cadmium (representing less than 1.4% of the samples collected) has not yet been determined; however it is unlikely to be indicative of a widespread concern. In addition to lead and cadmium, much of the fill contains other metals such as arsenic, barium, chromium, and mercury at levels that warrant additional characterization but that did not exceed levels considered to be hazardous waste.

What about other chemicals that might be present?

Initial waste characterization testing of the fill material excavated from the school included TCLP for metals, pesticides, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and semivolatile organic compounds (SVOCs), as well as total concentrations of PCBs. As the project went on and there were no significant detections of pesticides, VOCs, or SVOCs, the list was modified to TCLP metals, total metals, and total PCBs.

During the initial phase of the upcoming Study Area characterization, every sample will be analyzed for arsenic, cadmium, and lead, and at least 20% of the samples will be analyzed for the full suite of TCLP metals and total metals, PCBs, and SVOCs. VOCs will be analyzed for in any sample where field readings indicate they may be present.

How can I be exposed to lead and other contaminants in the fill?

People can be exposed to soil contaminants such as lead if they get soil particles on their hands and swallow the soil through hand-to-mouth activity. Some exposure may also occur when contaminated soil is tracked inside a building and becomes part of indoor dust. Other ways people could be exposed are by breathing windblown soil and dust particles, or by eating vegetables grown in contaminated soil. Young children have the greatest potential for exposure to soil contaminants because they often come into direct contact with the soil while playing or digging in the dirt, and may swallow the soil by putting their fingers, hands or toys in their mouths.

Should I be tested for lead?

Whether or not to get tested is an individual decision. Exposures to lead can be evaluated by measuring the level of lead in blood. Everyone has a small amount of lead in their body, and New York State regulations require medical providers to test all children for lead when they are one year old and again when they are two years old. An elevated blood lead level suggests a source of exposure, but the test cannot identify where the lead came from. If you have a young child who has not recently had a blood lead test, and you have concerns about his or her potential lead exposure, you should consult your pediatrician about having your child tested.

Will my children get sick if they play in my yard? What measures should I take to protect them?

We currently do not have enough information to determine whether there is any fill material in the residential yards, or if it does exist, whether it represents an exposure concern for people in the Study Area. However, you can reduce the chances for exposure to lead and other chemicals in the soil by taking steps to minimize direct and repeated contact (particularly among young children) with soils. Maintenance of a grass or mulch cover will help prevent direct contact with the soil. Unnecessary digging in the dirt should be avoided, and children and adults should wash hands after outdoor activities to help reduce the potential for exposure. The use of doormats and periodic damp mopping of floors can help reduce exposure to outdoor soil that might be tracked indoors.

Can I plant a garden? Should I eat vegetables grown in my garden?

Eating homegrown vegetables is a decision that is yours to make. Until the area has been properly characterized we do not have enough information to determine whether fill material and any contaminants are present near your garden. The NYSDOH recommends best practices (described below) that can be followed to reduce the potential for exposure anytime people are concerned that soil may contain man-made or naturally occurring contaminants. To help reduce any exposures you might have from vegetable gardening:

- Consider growing vegetables in raised beds with clean soil (at least ten inches deep). Use untreated wood to make the beds. Pressure-treated wood and railroad ties contain added chemicals.
- Wear gloves when working in the garden and avoid bringing soil inside the house.
- Brush off your clothes and remove shoes and gloves.
- Wash with soap and water after gardening or any time before you eat.
- For additional information about healthy gardening at:
<http://www.health.ny.gov/publications/1301/>.

Can we use Houghton Park?

Yes. The playground areas of this park are covered with wood chips that prevent contact with the soils beneath. Where park soils are covered by grass, surface soils (soil located immediately beneath the grass cover) will be tested for contamination. In the meantime, NYSDEC and NYSDOH recommend that children not be allowed to dig or play in dirt in the park.

Will my property be tested? When?

The initial phase of the study area characterization will include testing of public properties and rights-of-way to be followed by residential properties. Any such testing is anticipated to be completed by the end of this summer. If you live within the Study Area and would like to have your property tested, please contact the NYSDEC representative listed on Page 5.

Who is going to clean up my yard, if necessary?

The need for cleanup measures or other interim remedial measures (e.g., emplacement of cover material) has not yet been determined. NYSDEC will work to ensure the responsible party(ies) covers the cost of cleanup.

Will I be responsible for the cost of any cleanup action on my property, if it's deemed necessary?

There will be no cost to individual property owners for any investigation or subsequent cleanup activities that may be undertaken on their property to address this contamination.

How will this impact my property value?

Until the Study Area characterization is complete, any effect on property values cannot be evaluated. However, we believe that giving permission for the characterization study to be performed as quickly as possible reduces any possible stigma associated with unconfirmed and uncharacterized materials potentially existing at a property. This uncertainty may be more significant than any lingering property value effect once the area has been properly characterized and, if materials are confirmed to be present, any necessary cleanup measures have been implemented. Therefore it is advisable for property owners to cooperate in allowing access for any testing or cleanup measures that may be deemed necessary for their property.

Why wasn't this addressed years ago?

The presence of fill containing ash, glass and brick waste at Corning-Painted Post East High School came to our attention at the outset of excavation work during the spring of 2012 which was reported in the media. At that time, the extent of the fill was not known and still is not known. Based on anecdotal reporting and subsequent research into historical documentation, additional study is warranted to determine whether any other parts of the Study Area are underlain by the same or similar fill. NYSDEC asked Corning Incorporated to conduct an evaluation and Corning Incorporated has entered into an order with NYSDEC to do so.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Where to find information?

Project documents are available at the following location(s) to help the public stay informed:

NYSDEC – Region 8 Office
6274 East Avon- Lima Rd.
Avon, NY 14414
M-F: 8:45am – 4:30pm
Contact: Linda Vera for an
appointment (585) 226 - 5324

Southeast Steuben County Library
300 Nasser Civic Center Plaza
Suite 101
Corning, NY 14830
phone: (607) 936-3713

Project documents are also available on the NYSDEC website at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/97180.html>.

Whom to Contact

Comments and questions are always welcome and should be directed as follows:

Project-Related Questions

Gregory B. MacLean, P.E.
Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Environmental Remediation
6274 East Avon-Lima Road
Avon, NY 14414
585-226-5356
gbmaclea@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Project-Related Health Questions

Melissa A. Doroski, MPH
New York State Department of Health
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#1787
Albany, NY 12237
518-402-7860
BEEI@health.state.ny.us

We encourage you to share this fact sheet with neighbors and tenants, and/or post this fact sheet in a prominent area of your building for others to see.

Receive Future Site Fact Sheets by Email

Have site information such as this fact sheet sent right to your email inbox. NYSDEC invites you to sign up with one or more contaminated sites county email listservs available at the following web page: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/61092.html>. It's quick, it's free, and it will help keep you *better informed*.



As a listserv member, you will periodically receive site-related information/announcements for all contaminated sites in the county(ies) you select.

Note: Please disregard if you already have signed up and received this fact sheet electronically.