



## Information Notice



# News Release

Washington Department of Ecology news  
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### *Soil Safety Program to clean up soil contamination at seven parks this fall*

**OLYMPIA** – This week, the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) is starting another round of park cleanups to remove arsenic- and lead-contaminated soils from play areas at parks in King and Pierce counties.

The park play areas being cleaned up are at Dottie Harper in Burien, McMicken Heights and Sunset Playfields in SeaTac, Lake Grove in Federal Way, Dockton on Vashon Island, and American Lake and Kiwanis in Lakewood.

Although contamination levels in the parks are not high enough to cause immediate concern, the long-term health risk for children has made the cleanups a priority for Ecology.

Work is scheduled for a narrow window of time between the busy summer season and the onset of heavy rains. “We have a very tight timeline,” said Ecology’s cleanup coordinator, John Zinza, who will oversee the contractors. “Grass must be seeded by mid-October in order to survive the winter, and rain can make soil work more difficult.”

Park neighbors can expect construction noise and some truck traffic during normal work hours. Contractors will use dust control measures to minimize contaminated soil escaping the site.

Soil sampling in 2010 confirmed the presence of arsenic and lead contamination from the former Asarco smelter in Tacoma.

Money from a settlement with Asarco allowed Ecology to expand the existing Soil Safety Program to include parks, camps, and public multi-family housing. The program, created through 2005 legislation, initially covered school and childcare play areas.

“Every single park cleanup project protects more children in South King and Pierce counties from toxic chemicals,” said state Rep. Dave Upthegrove, D–Des Moines, the prime sponsor of the original soil safety legislation. “This program is an investment in the health and safety of future generations.”

Play area cleanups reduce arsenic and lead exposure for large numbers of children, in the places they regularly spend time. “Children’s developing bodies are more sensitive to the toxic effects of heavy metals. They play on the ground, and their hand-to-mouth behaviors put them at higher risk than adults,” explained Marian Abbett, Ecology’s Tacoma Smelter Plume project manager.

Some contamination may still remain outside of designated play areas, especially in wooded areas. Several parks have already installed signs that recommend reducing contact with those soils.

Simple actions can also help reduce contact with potentially contaminated soils – hand-washing, taking off shoes or using a doormat to keep dirt out of the home, regular vacuuming and damp-dusting, and keeping toys clean.

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**Read more about Tacoma Smelter Plume cleanup:** <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/tacoma-smelter.html>

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**Broadcast version:**

The Washington Department of Ecology is starting cleanup work this week at seven parks in King and Pierce counties. In 2010, the department found arsenic and lead in park soils. The contamination came from the former Asarco smelter in north Tacoma. Money from a settlement with Asarco is now paying to remove and replace polluted soils.

The parks are Dottie Harper in Burien, McMicken Heights and Sunset Playfields in SeaTac, Lake Grove in Federal Way, Dockton on Vashon Island, and American Lake and Kiwanis in Lakewood. Work is expected to run through the end of October.

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