

Town of Pines Soil Sampling – Q&A Document

1) For areas where elevated levels of coal combustion byproducts (CCBs) are found, is there an immediate health risk?

We have reviewed the results with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). For those properties with elevated levels, the EPA has confirmed that there is currently no immediate health threat given the levels shown and the time of year. However, we will need to take steps to remove contaminated soil from the affected properties. We are in direct contact with the owners of those properties.

2) What should I do if I have health concerns?

For health-related questions, residents may reach out to the regional office of the ATSDR, Mark Johnson, (312) 886-0840.

3) Is groundwater affected?

Ongoing groundwater sampling results from the community continue to indicate that levels of arsenic in groundwater are below levels necessitating action.

4) What prompted NIPSCO to sample yards?

During the installation of municipal water service in 2003, soil samples were taken from a range of locations along the roadways throughout the community, including public rights-of-way in the yards of some residences. Results of the samples taken at that time did not show chemicals associated with CCBs to be above established EPA health guidelines.

As a part of NIPSCO's remedial investigation process in the Pines community, the EPA requested that some soil samples from selected yards be collected to assess whether any CCBs were present, and if so, whether the latest results were consistent with earlier samples collected during the installation of the municipal water line between 2003 and 2005. The sampling occurred at nine properties in November 2014, seven of which show elevated levels of arsenic. We have been in direct contact with the owners of each of these properties to discuss their individual results and next steps.

5) Was arsenic found in prior samplings? If so, was any corrective action required?

Arsenic was detected in soil samples collected within the water line excavations along the roadways, but at much lower levels than those recently found on the residential properties. Those levels did not warrant any corrective action.

6) Does additional sampling need to be done? What is the timeline for that sampling?

Following the most recent results, we would like to sample all 37 properties believed to potentially contain CCBs. We are consulting with the EPA to develop a plan and timeline for that sampling, and will contact the owners of those properties where sampling will occur.

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7) What are the remediation plans for affected properties?

Remedial activities will likely involve excavation and off-site disposal of impacted surface soils/CCBs and restoration of landscaping and vegetation. NIPSCO will work with the EPA and each property owner to develop an appropriate remediation plan.

8) Were any materials (e.g., radiation) besides arsenic found in the samples? What other contaminants have been found in the ground during the Alternative Superfund process?

Many of the samples found to have elevated arsenic also showed thallium concentrations above developed standards, but to a much lesser degree than arsenic. When NIPSCO collected the soil samples, samples were also collected to be tested for radionuclides. Once we receive the radionuclides test results, we will notify property owners accordingly.

9) How did coal ash get into the community?

The nearby Michigan City Generating Station, which is owned and operated by NIPSCO, uses coal to generate electricity. The burning of coal results in CCBs. Historic documentation show that CCBs from the Michigan City Generating Station were disposed of at the Yard 520 Restricted Waste Facility. Some CCBs were also used decades ago as roadbed by the Town of Pines and as yard filler by some residents.

10) Where does NIPSCO dispose of coal ash now?

NIPSCO's coal ash is now removed from the Michigan City Generating Station and is taken to an environmentally compliant disposal facility in Jasper County.