



Ross Park Playfields Environmental Investigation Update

August 10, 2010



This status report is being issued on behalf of the Office of Mayor William (Bill) C. Burkhardt and the St. Bernard City Council regarding environmental sampling recently completed at the Ross Park Playfields. This environmental investigation program is being conducted in cooperation with the U.S. EPA.

The Ross Park Playfields are located within a former industrialized area previously used for the production of asphalt paving products. Conversion to a recreational facility occurred several decades ago. Reports of “tar-like” seeps in small areas of the playfields have occurred sporadically throughout the Park’s history. These seeps were typically addressed through excavation and removal of the “tar” material, with excavated areas then backfilled with clean soil.

In February 2010, the City and U.S. EPA completed an environmental investigation of the playfield area including advancement of 40 soil borings. The purpose of this investigation was to assess the source of seepage in a more detailed fashion, assess potential health risks, and develop a permanent “fix” or remediation strategy. Four soil samples obtained from depths ranging from three to eight feet were also submitted for detailed laboratory analysis.

The results of sampling indicate that material seeping to the ground surface is consistent with “tar” or asphalt products. The primary compounds of concern related to these materials are called Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons or “PAHs”. The compounds are also quite common in soils surrounding urbanized areas and especially within major transportation corridors (they are also contained in diesel exhaust and various combustion by-products).

The Health Assessment Section (HAS) of the Ohio Department of Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, recently evaluated the February 2010 sampling results. On May 4, 2010, the Ohio Department of Health released the following conclusion on current health risks associated with the Ross Park facility:

“Conclusions

ODH concludes that exposure to site-related PAHs may pose a public health hazard if the tarry material reaches the surface and the public comes into direct contact with PAH-contaminated soil in the vicinity of the west ball diamond of Ross Park. This conclusion is based on the distinct possibility of exposure during a “seep event” during the summer months when use of the park by children is heaviest and not necessarily on the concentrations of chemicals of concern in surface soils. Specific information regarding levels of the chemicals of concern present in surface soils and in ambient air during the summer seep events is not available, limiting the HAS staff’s ability to determine if exposure to these seeps pose a risk to the health of people using the park.

Recommendations

- The oily tar found at depth near the southwest baseball diamond should be isolated and contained or removed and the area covered with clean soil to protect the public from direct exposure to polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.*
- Interim measures adopted by the City to identify and remove the tar substance that reaches the surface in that area of Ross Park should continue.*

Public Health Action Plan

- If U.S. EPA becomes aware that the tarry substance has seeped to the surface (most likely during the hot summer months), U.S. EPA plans to collect a sample of the oily material in order to identify its composition, including an analysis for PAH content. In addition, U.S. EPA plans to sample for volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds in the ambient air during a seep event, which will aid in the evaluation of exposure via the inhalation route.”*

Source: Letter Health Consultation, Soil Data Evaluation, Ross Park Tar Site, St. Bernard, Hamilton County, Ohio, EPA Facility ID: OHN000510412 - Ohio Department of Health, Health Assessment Section Under Cooperative Agreement with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (May 4, 2010).

The City has implemented each of these recommendations including development of a Risk Mitigation Plan to address interim management of seeps should they occur. This Plan includes step by step procedures for their removal and repair. In addition, more intensive sampling of seep material was conducted on August 3, 2010 in an effort to more accurately assess exposure risks and the need for air sampling in impacted areas.

The City appreciates the ongoing support and cooperation of residents using the Ross Park Playfield facility and assures all residents that we will continue to address these issues in a safe, cost effective and environmentally sound manner.

Thank You