

COMMUNITY Notice

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances through the restoration of contaminated resources, enforcement, regulation and pollution prevention.

Proposed Cleanup Plan for Noah Webster Elementary School Available For Public Comment

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) invites the public to review and comment on a proposed plan to cap the burn ash and waste (burned waste)/contaminated soil at the Noah Webster Elementary School (Site) located at 4801 Elm Street in San Diego. The proposed plan, called a draft Removal Action Workplan (RAW), describes in detail the environmental investigations conducted, technical findings, and the proposed project activities to cap the burned waste/contaminated soil at the Site.

Our agency, DTSC, is a department within the California Environmental Protection Agency, and is responsible for overseeing environmental investigations and cleanup activities at sites such as the Noah Webster Elementary School site.

Why Protective Actions are Necessary

There is **no** immediate risk to school students, faculty, staff or the community. This is because the public is not exposed to the burned waste/contaminated soil. Also, the burned waste is covered with a layer of soil (between 2 and 15 feet thick) that acts as a barrier so the burned waste is not exposed at ground surface.

However, burned waste commonly contains elevated levels of chemicals that are known to increase risks to human health and the environment. Sampling at the Site indicated levels of chemicals in the burned waste/contaminated soil above DTSC's protective standards which require remedial action to protect human health and the environment. DTSC will oversee the remedial action and ensure work is performed in a manner that does not harm people or the environment.

Site History

Noah Webster Elementary School currently operates as a kindergarten through sixth grade program. Before the school was built, a burn dump operated on a portion of the property, from about 1934 to 1941. Reportedly, trash was burned and used to fill a canyon that crossed the central portion of the site from east to west. During school construction from 1954 to 1955, the canyon was brought to finished grade using burned waste excavated from the eastern portion of the site (east of the current playground boundary) and undocumented fill material.

Public Comment Period



**September 5, 2014 through
October 6, 2014:**

A 30-day public comment period is being held to receive public comments on the draft RAW. Public comments must be postmarked or e-mailed by **October 6, 2014**, and sent to:

Chia Rin Yen, Project Manager
Dept. of Toxic Substances Control
5796 Corporate Avenue
Cypress, CA 90630-4732
Phone: 714-484-5417
E-mail: ChiaRin.Yen@dtsc.ca.gov

Open House & Public Meeting Announcement:

Wednesday, September 17, 2014
Noah Webster Elementary School
4801 Elm St., San Diego, CA 92102
Open House: 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Public Meeting: 6:00 p.m.

DTSC Public Participation contact:

Marcia Rubin, Public Participation Specialist
Dept. of Toxic Substances Control
Phone: (714) 484-5338
E-mail: Marcia.Rubin@dtsc.ca.gov

Environmental Investigations Conducted

Numerous investigations were conducted to evaluate the environmental conditions at the site. During these investigations, contaminants commonly associated with burned waste, including lead, dioxins, metals, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and furans were tested and only furans, dioxins and lead were found in burn waste/contaminated soil at levels above DTSC's protective standards.

These investigations indicate burned waste generally is present at depths ranging from 2 to 30 feet below ground surface. The burned waste/contaminated soil is generally located beneath the playground in the central portion of the site. It extends west to 47th Street, north beneath the lunch shelter, school buildings and east to the edge of the playground. Burned waste/contaminated soil is located beneath the area further east of the playground where it was excavated and used to fill the canyon during school construction.

As a result of past environmental investigations, the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD) prepared a draft cleanup plan that was presented to the public. Initially, SDUSD intended to have buildings and a lunch area constructed on the central portion of the site. In response to community concern, that prior draft cleanup plan was withdrawn and was not implemented.

Additional investigations were performed on the storm drainage system beneath the school property in response to public comments (made during a previous public comment period) regarding the potential for the burned waste/contaminated soil to contaminate Chollas Creek and the surrounding ecosystem. DTSC determined the drainage system located beneath the school property is not allowing contaminants from the burned waste/contaminated soil to move from beneath the school property to Chollas Creek or the surrounding environment.

Based on the results of these additional investigations, a revised draft RAW was prepared to evaluate options to meet the following objectives:

- Prevent ingestion/direct contact with and inhalation of burned waste/contaminated soil by school staff, students, and construction workers;

- Limit the potential for exposure of the community to burned waste/contaminated soil and the associated chemicals of concern from dust created during construction activities.
- Limit the potential for burned waste/contaminated soil exposure from activities that may result in exposing such wastes to the ground surface.

Proposed Cleanup Plan (draft RAW)

To address burned waste/contaminated soil at the site, the draft RAW proposes a soil barrier cap with institutional controls:

- **Cap** - Two areas will be covered with either shotcrete or concrete because the cover fill at these areas are less than 2-foot-thick. See the figure in Page 3 for the locations of these two areas. The existing soil barrier and overlying asphalt, concrete, and decomposed granite, along with the proposed shotcrete and concrete, will be maintained as a cap for the burned waste/contaminated soil.
- **Institutional Controls** - Procedures will be developed to maintain the soil barrier cap and ensure future activities do not penetrate cap resulting an unacceptable risk to human health. The Institutional Controls include a Land Use Covenant and Operation and Maintenance Plan explained below.
- **Land Use Covenant (deed restriction)** – A covenant will be used to limit use of the property to school use only.
- **Operation and Maintenance Plan** – The plan identifies specific activities to be conducted to ensure continued protection of human health and the environment.

This alternative (**soil barrier cap with institutional controls**) is recommended because it protects human health and the environment, and will not disturb burned waste/contaminated soil, which could potentially expose school occupants or residents to contamination.

California Environmental Quality Act

In compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), DTSC found that because the waste will be undisturbed and protective measures taken, the impacts to human health/and or environment would be less than significant, and a Notice of Exemption (NOE) has been prepared.



How You Can Participate – Public Comment Period

DTSC encourages your comment on the draft RAW and invites you to an open house and public meeting to discuss the draft RAW and ask any questions you may have. Details for both are on the front of this Community Notice.

Next Steps

DTSC will review and consider public comments received before approving the RAW. Upon approval of the RAW, field work is anticipated to begin in summer 2015. RAW activities will not take place while students are on campus.

Where to Find the Documents

The draft RAW and other related documents for Noah Webster Elementary School are available for review online at http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/profile_report.asp?global_id=37820007&mytab=activities or these locations:

DTSC File Room

5796 Corporate Ave., Cypress, CA 90630-4732, Phone: (714) 484-5336, Mon. – Fri.: 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Please contact Ms. Jone Bario at the above number to make an appointment.

Oak Park Branch Library

Reference Desk
2802 54th Street
San Diego, CA 92105-4941
Phone: (619) 527-3406
Mon/Thurs/Fri:
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Tues/Wed: 12:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Saturday: 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

San Diego Unified School District

Physical Plant Operations Center Annex
4860 Ruffner Street, Room 5
San Diego, CA 92111-1522
Contact: Kathryn Ferrell
Phone: (858) 627-7298
Monday – Friday:
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Noah Webster Elementary School

Administration Office
4801 Elm Street
San Diego, CA 91202-1354
Phone: (619) 362-0000
Monday – Friday:
8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



