



News Release

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New Analysis Examines Blood Lead Levels Near Exide

SACRAMENTO – A California Department of Public Health (CDPH) analysis has found blood lead levels in children near the former Exide Technologies battery recycling facility in Vernon are higher than for those who live further from the facility, but that the age of housing in the area appears to play a significant role.

The analysis, conducted by CDPH at the request of the California Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), also showed that children under age six living in the area near the Exide facility were more likely to have higher blood lead levels than children in Los Angeles County overall.

CDPH found that 3.58% of young children, within one mile of the former Exide facility, had levels of 4.5 micrograms of lead or more per deciliter of blood. For comparison, during 2012 in Los Angeles County overall, 1.95% of children fell into this higher blood lead category. In the zone greater than one mile from the former Exide facility, but still within the study's broader Exide analysis area, reaching up to 4.5 miles from the facility, the percentage of children in the higher category was 2.41%.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention uses a "reference level" of 5 micrograms per deciliter of blood and greater, to identify children with blood lead levels significantly higher than average and who it recommends should receive some public health action to reduce their future exposure to lead. California considers values at and above 4.5 micrograms per deciliter as equivalent to this level.

"The California Department of Public Health's analysis is an important component of our understanding of the public health impacts from lead in the vicinity of the Exide facility," said DTSC's Director Barbara Lee. "They pulled together a tremendous amount of data and provided valuable insights that will be factored into our sampling and cleanup work. We appreciate their effort."

The analysis also found that the age of housing is an important predictor of elevated blood lead levels in the area. When both proximity to the former Exide facility and the year of housing were included, the effect of proximity to Exide on blood lead levels was much smaller. This appears to be because older housing is more common in the areas closer to the Exide facility.

Older housing often has lead hazards because lead content in paint was not strictly limited until 1978. CDPH researchers found that 3.11% of young children living in areas near Exide with many homes built before 1940 had elevated blood lead levels, while only 1.87% had elevated lead

levels where most homes were built after 1940.

A sub-study that included detailed data on the age of individual homes found a large increased likelihood of higher blood lead among children living in a home built before 1925. In this analysis, the effect of distance from Exide was not seen, after controlling for the age of housing.

CDPH researchers examined blood lead data from children under age six because the vast majority of testing is done for young children. They are the ones at greater risk for lead exposure, so testing and interventions have typically focused on young children.

CalEPA and DTSC requested the analysis as part of the state's investigation of possible impacts from operations at the former Exide facility. The Department of Public Health analyzed blood lead level data from nearly 12,000 children under the age of 6 who had their blood tested in 2012 – the last full year that Exide was operating.

In 2013, DTSC ordered Exide to provide free blood lead testing for those living in the area. And in early 2015 DTSC informed Exide that it would not grant a permit for the facility's operation, and ordered the closure process to begin.

On Feb. 17, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. proposed a \$176.6 million spending plan to expedite and expand soil testing and cleanup of lead in the communities around the former Exide facility. Under that plan, DTSC will test all residential properties, schools, daycare centers, and parks within a 1.7 mile radius of the former Exide facility, and estimates it will clean up contaminated soil at up to 2,500 properties with the highest lead levels and greatest potential for exposure. The area contains about 10,000 residential properties.

To date, more than 1,000 properties have been sampled and over 200 properties have been cleaned up in the area surrounding the former Exide facility.

Free Blood Lead Testing

DTSC encourages residents living near the former Exide facility to have their blood tested for lead. The free and confidential tests are conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. To set up a free screening, call (844) 888-2290, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. For more information regarding this program, visit www.bloodleadtesting.com/

A copy of the Analysis of Children's Blood Lead Levels in the Area Around the Exide Site is available at www.dtsc.ca.gov/exide Contact DTSC's Residents Hotline at (844) 225-3887



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FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES: Contact the Department of Toxic Substances Control by phone at (800) 728-6942 or visit www.dtsc.ca.gov. To report illegal handling, discharge, or disposal of hazardous waste, call the Waste Alert Hotline at (800) 698-6942.

The mission of DTSC is to protect California's people and environment from harmful effects of toxic substances by restoring contaminated resources, enforcing hazardous waste laws, reducing hazardous waste generation, and encouraging the manufacture of chemically safer products.