
**TRAIL
A R E A
HEALTH &
ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**



NEWS RELEASE issued by THEC

2023 Children's Lead Levels Continue to Decline

December 7, 2023

Trail, BC - The results from the 2023 children's blood lead testing clinic show that the average blood lead level for children aged six months to 36 months in Trail and Rivervale is 2.1 micrograms per decilitre. The downward trend continues with the average remaining below 3 since 2018. The Program is pleased to report participation has increased over the last two years after a drop during the pandemic. Participation in blood lead clinics continues to be important for understanding progress, and continuing to learn, as a community with an operational lead smelter. Thank you to all the families for supporting your children's health and the success of the Program.

The work of the Trail Area Health & Environment Program (THEP, the Program) aims to further reduce children's blood lead levels. THEP reduces lead exposure in the community from our air, soil, and built environments as well as encouraging residents to adopt healthy practices such as handwashing before eating, ensuring an iron rich diet and keeping floors dust-free (to name a few). "It's so impressive", remarks Meghan Morris, THEP's public health nurse. "When I do a follow-up home visit with families after receiving their child's blood lead results, families have already implemented changes to reduce their child's exposure." THEP also connects with family groups in the community to ensure messaging is shared and supports get to where they are needed.

THEP's Air Quality Program, delivered by Teck Trail Operations, works to reduce lead in airborne dust. Levels of lead in community air continue to meet the US Environmental Protection Agency standard (used in the absence of Canadian air quality objectives or standards), and the year-to-date average is 0.08 micrograms per cubic metre.

Quotes:

Mayor Colleen Jones, City of Trail, and Chair of the Trail Area Health & Environment Committee, says, "Thank you to all the families that continue to participate in the blood lead testing clinics. We have one of the most robust monitoring programs in the world due to ongoing participation. I am excited to once again see that average blood lead levels in children continue to decline. The City is proud to be a leader and a partner in programs working to improve the health and well-being of our community."

Dr. Karin Goodison, Medical Health Officer, Interior Health says, "It is good to see the continual decrease in blood lead values for Trail area children. Although lead exposure remains higher for children in Trail compared to similar aged children in other parts of Canada and the USA, the gap is narrowing."

City Hall ♦ 1394 Pine Avenue, Trail, BC, Canada V1R 4E6 ♦ Telephone: (250) 364-1262 ♦ Fax: (250) 364-0830

www.thep.ca www.trail.ca

Dan Bouillon, Manager Environment, at Teck Trail Operations says, “I’m pleased that the comprehensive controls implemented as part of our Fugitive Dust Reduction Program continue to have a positive influence in the community and Teck is committed to identifying opportunities for further improvements.”

About the Trail Area Health & Environment Program (THEP)

THEP supports the community of Trail and nearby areas to live, work and play in an area influenced by smelter air emissions. Since the 1890’s Trail has been home to one of the world’s largest lead and zinc smelting and refining facilities. For more than 30 years, a group of partners—the City of Trail, Teck Trail, B.C. Ministry of Environment, and Interior Health—in collaboration with the community, has worked together to continually improve the health and wellbeing of people living near the smelter. THEP focuses on air, soil, health, built environments (homes and other structures), community connection, and understanding the interrelationships between these focus areas. THEP addresses the inherent overlap of different ways people are exposed to lead and maximizes opportunities for improving health and the environment through an integrated approach. Each year, THEP supports hundreds of people in the community with outreach, activities and supplies.

The Trail Area Health & Environment Committee (THEC) is a select committee of Trail City Council and includes local government, the community, provincial and local partners. It was established in 2001 by the Trail Lead Task Force which had conducted research on the issues for 10 years prior. Its mandate is to be a transparent platform for multistakeholder dialogue, collective decision-making and community engagement specific to THEP. A full description is available [online](#).

Over the past three decades children’s blood lead levels in Trail have declined and air quality has improved. For more information please visit thep.ca.

For more information, contact:

Interior Health media relations
1-844-469-7077 or media@interiorhealth.ca

Jayne Garry, Community Relations Leader – Public Relations, Teck Trail Operations
(250) 364-4878 or jayne.garry@teck.com

Colleen Jones, Mayor of the City of Trail & THEC Chair
cjones@trail.ca

Photos attached.

FAQ to follow.

BL Media Release FAQ Attachment

Why should I get my children's blood lead tested every year?

Blood lead levels vary year to year depending on where the child is spending their time (home, daycare, and outdoor play), their behaviour (crawling, hand to mouth activity) and their nutritional status (wide range of healthy foods, adequate iron stores). Blood lead testing ensures that children with elevated blood lead levels are identified and provided follow-up care. As a community, blood lead testing also helps monitor our overall progress in reducing lead exposure in the community. As lead can come from many sources, even if your home received soil management, you should continue to test your children's blood each year.

What should I do if I want to get my child's blood lead level tested?

Every year, THEP offers free voluntary testing of blood lead levels for children from the age of 6 to 36 months living in Trail, Casino, Oasis, Rivervale, Waneta and Warfield. Children up to 5 years old from other Lower Columbia communities are welcome to attend. Clinics are typically held in September with a follow-up clinic in February.

Please contact the Interior Health Public Health nurse for details. Call 250-364-6223 or text 250-231-5945.

Why is the blood lead clinic in September?

Lead levels are expected to be highest at the end of summer as windows and doors are open to the outdoors more, kids are playing outdoors more, and the ground in the community is snow-free and dry.

Are we going in the right direction?

Yes! We have seen a downward trend over the years. It's been under 3 micrograms per decilitre since 2018 with this year the average blood lead level being 2.1 micrograms per decilitre. To compare, in the 1990s, the average blood Pb level in Trail children was over 14 µg/dL.

Are we ever going to reach a safe blood lead level in Trail?

There is currently no known safe blood lead level. Canadian and U.S. health surveys indicate that the majority of the population has some exposure to lead. For the past five years, the average blood lead level for children 6-36 months in Trail has fallen below 3 micrograms per decilitre and the majority of children tested are below the B.C. C.D.C.'s Exposure Investigation Level (of 5 ug/dL).