



US Army Corps
of Engineers
Baltimore District

Residents' Guide for Spring Valley Soil Removal



Soil removal



Restoration



Finished yard

Introduction

In May 2001, the Army Corps of Engineers with its partnering agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency and the D.C. Department of Health, began collecting soil samples to determine arsenic levels on properties and lots across Spring Valley, Fort Gaines and portions of AU Park. The sampling is part of the Army's ongoing investigation to identify and remove hazards associated with past military activities that occurred in the area and that pose a threat to human health or the environment.

To date, nearly all of the 1,602 properties and lots within the Spring Valley project boundary have been sampled for arsenic. Several hundred properties were also sampled for chemical warfare materiel, explosives and their breakdown products. Arsenic was the only chemical of concern identified.

From the arsenic sampling results, a number of properties were recommended for follow-on grid testing. This testing concluded that about 150 properties and lots had arsenic soil levels above the protective cleanup goal of 20 parts per million, a goal that had been established by the project partners and supported by the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel and the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board, or RAB. Remediation of the first group of properties began in the spring of 2002 and the second group of properties is currently under way. The Corps estimates it will take several years to complete the remaining properties.

For those residents whose properties have been identified for remediation, the Corps of Engineers has prepared this guidebook to answer some basic questions and provide information about what is involved in removing arsenic-contaminated soil from your property.

In this guide you will find a list of the most frequently asked questions and answers concerning the soil removal work. A checklist of items that need to be completed before soil excavation can begin on your property is also included. And finally, there are a few comments from Spring Valley residents who have already had soil removed from their property as part of this process. If you have any questions or issues not addressed in this guide, please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988.

Frequently Asked Questions

Arsenic Soil Remediation and Soil Removal

What needs to be done on my property?

Your property has received two rounds of sampling as part of the Corps' investigation of the Spring Valley neighborhood. In the second round of sampling, the Corps' contractor divided your property into 20-foot by 20-foot grids. One sample was collected from each grid and analyzed for arsenic.

The planned action on your property involves the removal of any grid on your property that exceeded 20 milligrams of arsenic per kilogram of soil, which is commonly referred to as 20 parts-per-million, or ppm.

How was 20 ppm selected as the cleanup number?

The protective cleanup goal of 20 ppm was agreed upon by the Corps, EPA and D.C. Health, and approved by both the Mayor's Scientific Advisory Panel and the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board. The RAB is comprised of area residents and representatives from each of the three partnering agencies.

This cleanup goal was established based on achieving a level determined to be very protective against long-term cancer and other non-cancer risks for both children and adults. This cleanup goal also considered the natural background levels found in the soils within the Washington, D.C. area.

How do I know where those grids are located?

The results of these sampling efforts were explained in letters you should have already received. A map showing which grids contained soil arsenic above 20 ppm was included with your grid results.

If you did not receive this information or need another copy, please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988.

What is involved in remediating a contaminated grid?

Following the removal of plants and structures necessary to complete the remediation of a particular grid, the soil within that 20-foot by 20-foot area will be excavated to a depth of two feet. Confirmatory soil samples will be taken from the floor and sidewalls of the excavated grid to ensure all the soil above 20 ppm has been removed.

If the results indicate that arsenic levels are at or below 20 ppm (the cleanup goal), the excavated grid will be filled with certified clean fill, six inches of top soil and then sodded with grass.

If, however, the sampling results indicate that arsenic levels are still above 20 ppm, additional excavation will be performed and followed up with additional sampling to confirm that all the elevated arsenic has been removed.

How will the Corps access my property?

The contractor will evaluate the location of the grids that need to be removed and select the best possible route for accessing those areas.

If access hurdles arise, several options exist to resolve such hurdles including, but not limited to, pursuing cooperation from an adjacent property owner in order to complete the needed removal. Physical barriers will not inhibit our ability to complete the cleanup on your property.

How long will the work take?

The amount of time required to complete the soil removal and basic yard restoration varies from property to property. Factors such as weather, the number of grids that need to be removed, access to those grids and whether or not there is a need to dig deeper than two feet can affect the length of time needed to complete the work on your property. Properties remediated to date have taken between two and five weeks.

Restoration

Will the Corps restore my yard to its original condition?

For those areas of your yard impacted by the soil removal, the Corps will complete basic restoration. This includes backfill, compaction, topsoil and sod to restore these areas. For landscaping features such as trees, shrubs and bushes that are impacted by the soil removal, you will be provided financial compensation based on an appraisal of your landscaping prior to the start of the removal work.

As the property owner, you are free to hire a contractor of your choice to design and install new landscaping or use the compensation in any way you wish. (If you want to review a copy of an appraisal worksheet, please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988).

How will I be compensated for shrubs and trees that must be removed?

The Corps' contractor will take video footage of your yard before any intrusive work begins. The reimbursement value of any trees, shrubs, bushes or plants destroyed during the removal action will be appraised by an independent, nationally recognized arborist. A

standard accepted formula is used to assign values to the impacted vegetation. The landscape appraisal will include labor and replacement costs of the impacted vegetation. A copy of this appraisal will be provided to you prior to the start of work on your property.

Financial reimbursement will be provided to you after the completion of the soil removal and after a finalization of the total reimbursement amount. In the past, property owners have received a reimbursement check within about 30 days after the completion of the work.

It is important to note that any trees on city property cannot be reimbursed to the property owner. The Corps, in accordance with the D.C. Urban Forestry Administration guidance, will perform a replanting effort for lost trees on city property.

Is it possible to save my large tree?

Whether or not a tree can be saved is dependent on several factors. One factor is the level of arsenic contamination in the surrounding grids. Other influencing factors include the current health of the tree and its location with regard to accessing the property to address the contamination.

The arborist who evaluates your property will characterize the health of the tree or trees. It is important to note that although the cleanup goal is to remove arsenic-contaminated soil that exceeds 20 ppm, health officials agree that it is acceptable and still protective for soil below 43 ppm to remain in the root zones of trees or where access or other construction limitations make soil removal difficult or unsafe. Based on this, the Corps will work with you, as well as the EPA and D.C. Health, to discuss what options might exist for a given tree. The final decision is made on a property-by-property and tree-by-tree basis.

Will walkway, patios and driveways be removed as well?

Whether or not one of these features will need to be removed will depend on the level of arsenic present. Project representatives will discuss these issues with each property owner. If a hardscape feature must be removed, the Corps' contractor can replace the feature or you can decide that you would like to hire someone else to do the job.

In that case, you would receive a check for the replacement cost of the feature at the end of the removal work in the amount that was stated in an appraisal performed by a qualified sub-contractor of the Corps. If a hardscape appraisal is needed for your property, the Corps will consult with you during its development.

What if I want another estimate on the replacement costs for the affected portions of my property?

The Corps has arranged for a licensed, independent, nationally recognized arborist to provide an unbiased and standardized appraisal for landscaping features on your property. A copy of this individual's resume can be provided if requested.

If additional concerns remain, the Corps is committed to working with property owners to find reasonable solutions to individual needs. Several property owners have obtained estimates from other contractors in addition to the arborist and landscape company hired by the Corps' contractor.

While the Corps cannot pay for any costs associated with these additional assessments, the Corps will review and consider any additional estimates that are submitted prior to work beginning on your property.

Temporary Relocation

Will I need to be relocated during the work?

Possibly. Although there is no environmental health risk associated with staying in your home during the soil removal, there is the possibility that utilities may be interrupted during the work, or that access to and from your home may be impeded. The Corps offers relocation as an option to homeowners on a case-by-case basis once a determination is made about the likelihood of blocked access or interruption of utilities. The Corps has experienced relocation specialists who will work with you, if temporary relocation is necessary. A Residents' Guide to Temporary Relocation will be provided to those eligible residents. This guide will explain all the steps involved in relocation and the security measures taken to protect your property in your absence.

Property Protection

How will my house be protected during the work?

The contractor performing the soil removal will be very cautious about activities near your house and will take special steps to protect the foundation and other structural features. During the inspection of your property prior to the soil removal, a video recording will be taken of the outside of your house and property to document the condition of your property before the Corps-related work begins.

What if something is damaged during the work?

There are multiple levels of protection regarding your property during the soil removal work. Landscape appraisals are used to make sure you are compensated appropriately for loss of shrubs, trees and bushes. If unexpected damage should occur during the Corps' work, one of three options is likely to occur.

The Corps and its contractor will work with you to assess the problem and determine if the Corps' contractors can complete the repairs.

Second, Corps contractors working on your property are required by law to carry comprehensive liability insurance. Therefore, repairs of unexpected damages could be covered through an insurance claim with the contractor.

Lastly, if a problem should occur that could not be addressed within the project, the property owner can file a claim with the U.S. Army Claims Service. If this should be necessary, a Corps representative can provide the required documents to file your claim.

Notification

How will I be kept informed of the progress?

The Corps continues to manage a multi-faceted outreach program to keep property owners and their neighbors informed on the progress. Corps personnel and contractors meet one-on-one and in small groups with property owners and neighbors before work begins, as well as talk regularly by telephone with property owners to explain the process and progress of the soil removal activities.

An e-newsletter is sent to property owners and neighbors impacted by the removal action process. The Corps also keeps the broader community informed about the progress of the removal work through regular mailings of the project's newsletter, *The Corps' pondent*, and community-wide public meetings.

The Corps also provides regular updates on our Spring Valley web site: <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm> and the project's toll-free information line, 1-800-434-0988.

What assurances will I get at the end of the work to show my property is okay?

Every property owner who has soil removal will receive a letter from the Corps and the EPA explaining the cleanup efforts completed on his or her property. This letter is currently under development by the Corps, EPA and the Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board. We anticipate this letter will be sent to eligible property owners beginning in 2003.

Whom should I call when I have questions or special needs?

The Corps of Engineers is overseeing this soil removal action. Severson Environmental Services, Inc., is the lead contractor conducting the fieldwork. Contact information is provided on the last page of this brochure. If you have a question or concern not addressed in this guide, please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988.

Preparation Checklist

Before the removal of arsenic-contaminated soil can begin on your property, the following items must be completed. We ask for your assistance and cooperation in completing these items.

1. Right of Entry

Prior to any soil removal on your property, the Corps of Engineers must receive your permission to access your property to perform this work. This is granted in the way of a signed Right-of-Entry form, similar to one you signed for the soil sampling. If you have any questions or concerns about this document or the removal work, please contact us so we can work with you to answer them.

2. Landscape and Hardscape Appraisals

Once we have received a signed Right-of-Entry, the Corps will arrange for an appraisal of your landscaping features (shrubs, trees and bushes) on your property that could potentially be impacted by the soil removal. This appraisal will be provided to you prior to the start of the soil removal on your property. Appraisals for hardscape features (walkways, patios and driveways) are done on an as-required basis. If a specific hardscape feature must be impacted as a result of the soil removal, an appraisal will be done at that time and provided to you. In either case, if you desire to obtain your own independent estimates for these features, you may do so. However, the Corps cannot cover the costs of these additional estimates.

3. Relocation Plan

If temporary relocation is necessary as result of the soil removal on your property, a Corps relocation specialist will contact you to arrange for suitable temporary housing. A relocation plan will be prepared and in place prior to the start of soil removal. A Residents' Guide to Temporary Relocation, which provides answers to many of the questions you might have regarding relocation, will be provided to you if relocation is necessary.

What residents are saying

While any type of cleanup in a residential community presents some short-term inconveniences for local residents, the Corps and its contractors have made consistent efforts to meet the community's needs and minimize these inconveniences. The following are excerpts from letters sent to us from property owners who have had soil removed from their properties by the Corps:

"We are impressed with their professionalism and the skill in carrying out the work with no damage to property and minimal impact on our daily routine. Attention to detail, particularly as regards our safety, was notable. Efforts made to keep the neighborhood informed and reassured as the work progressed was also noted and specifically applauded by our neighbors," property owner on 50th Street.

"The work came out exactly on schedule; they accommodated and coordinated with the restoration landscape designer I have retained. The attention to detail at every stage of the process was ideal," property owner on Tindall Street.

Several other property owners have expressed their willingness to speak directly with you about their experiences with the soil removal process. If you are interested in speaking with one of these owners, please call the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988.

How to reach us

For general questions or concerns about the soil removal work, please contact the Corps' Public Affairs Office at 1-800-434-0988. For specific questions, one of our community outreach specialists, Ted Henry or Ben Rooney, will return your call and provide assistance.

Where to find project information

For general information about the Spring Valley project, we encourage you to visit the Spring Valley web site at <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>

Among the information posted on the web site are project updates, meeting announcements and minutes, and fact sheets. If you are unable to access the Internet, please contact us and we will work with you to receive project information. The following fact sheets are available on the web site or can be mailed upon request:

1. The Investigative Process: Ordnance and Chemical Agent Containers, August 2002
2. Spring Valley Ordnance Cleanup: Past, Present and Future, August 2002
3. Spring Valley Area Cleanup and Safety Suggestions, July 2002
4. Quick Reference for Contractors and Workers in Spring Valley, July 2002 (English or Spanish)
5. Opportunities for Community Involvement in the Spring Valley Project, November 2001
6. Arsenic Sampling and the Removal Decision Process, October 2001
7. Operation Unit Summaries, July 26, 2001
8. Partner Fact Sheet, May 1, 2001
9. RAB Fact Sheet, May 1, 2001

You may also be interested in attending Spring Valley Restoration Advisory Board meetings, which are held on the second Tuesday of every month at St. David's Episcopal Church, 5150 Macomb Street, N.W. These meetings are open to the public.

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