



US Army Corps
of Engineers

Baltimore District

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News Release

Release No. 01-05
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For Release: February 27, 2001
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Spring Valley community meeting to offer soil sampling options

Baltimore – The Army will conduct a community meeting at 7 p.m. March 14 at the Metropolitan Memorial United Methodist Church, 3401 Nebraska Ave. N.W., to discuss the status of cleanup activities, including options for expanding soil sampling in the Spring Valley community. Presently, the Army is taking soil samples in selected areas of the former American University Experimental Station, that was used by the Army during World War I. Elevated levels of arsenic have been found in soil associated with the World War I material in burial pits on a Glenbrook Road property.

At a Feb. 13 community meeting, residents expressed concern about the current soil-sampling plan. Those concerns prompted the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, with its partners Region III of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the District of Columbia Department of Health, to evaluate alternatives for a more aggressive sampling plan. Details of the options will be discussed with the community at the March 14 meeting.

Consistent among all the options is the continued commitment by the Army to protecting the health of all residents of Spring Valley and those who live and work at American University.

Under the current plan, the Corps is testing the soil at specific locations identified to have the greatest potential for contamination based on photographs and historical documentation related to the research and testing of chemical weapons that occurred at the former experimental station during World War I.

Questions also were raised at the meeting about the elevated levels of arsenic detected in surface soil samples collected on the playground of the American University Child Development Center (CDC). Officials with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, have said that based on the levels of arsenic found in the soils at the child development center, children, their families and teachers should not experience any adverse health effects. However, ATSDR did agree to conduct an Exposure Investigation for the children and staff of the CDC. When the Exposure Investigation results are received, the ATSDR will provide an interpretation of the health significance, if any, to the parents of the children and the staff. If any children or staff members are found to have elevated levels of exposure to arsenic, ATSDR will recommend referrals to an environmental health specialty unit for further evaluation. ATSDR also will issue a written public report that summarizes the findings and makes recommendations for follow-up actions.

Arsenic is a component of Lewisite, one of the World War I chemical agents developed at the American University Experimental Station. It also is a naturally occurring element widely distributed in the environment. Low levels of arsenic are found in most fossil fuels, but the main use of arsenic in the United States is for pesticides.

More information about the Spring Valley project can be found at the Baltimore District website, <http://www.nab.usace.army.mil/projects/WashingtonDC/springvalley.htm>. Questions should be addressed to the Baltimore District Corps of Engineers Public Affairs Office at 410-962-2809. Updates also are provided regularly on the Spring Valley Information Line at 1-800-434-0988.