

FACT SHEET

January 15, 2014



FACT SHEET –Recent Supplemental Remedial Investigation (RI) Findings in the Area near the Calavera Canyon Neighborhood

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information to the general public regarding findings of past and recent investigations of the area near the Calavera Canyon neighborhood. On December 29th The El Paso Times published an article (**‘High levels: Lead, arsenic, mercury discovered in soil of Calavera area on West Side’**) that stated “Unhealthful levels of lead, arsenic and mercury were detected for the first time in several soil samples of the Calavera neighborhood in West El Paso, according to a recent remedial investigation report prepared for the Asarco Custodial Trust.”

Unfortunately, the article was **inaccurate**. The El Paso Times was responsive to The Trust’s concern with accuracy and the newspaper has published a clarification.

It is important to note that only 1 new sample was taken on the ASARCO property adjacent to the La Calavera neighborhood. This sample was not taken in the residential area. All of the other information in the area was collected previously by other investigators.

Below is a summary account of the previous and current findings and actions in the Calavera Canyon area:

2002 Residential Cleanup & Removal Action:

1. In 2001 the El Paso County Metals Site was brought to the attention of the EPA by State Senator Eliot Shapleigh and the El Paso Soils Workgroup.
2. In 2002 the EPA (working through its contractor, Weston Solutions, Inc.) conducted soil sampling to document the levels of potential contaminants in the surface and near-surface soils at various residences. The primary concerns associated with the El Paso County Metals Survey site were the presence of lead and arsenic above the EPA residential screening level of 500 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) lead and 24 mg/kg arsenic and industrial screening levels of 1000 mg/kg lead and 200 mg/kg arsenic. There were 1,686 soil samples collected, including samples taken in the

Calavera Canyon neighborhood. Analytical results reported the presence of lead and arsenic within a portion of the sample locations.

3. The EPA concluded that immediate action needed to be taken and properties were remediated by the removal of up to two feet of impacted from yards, backfilled with clean soils, and replacement of yard landscaping to pre-removal conditions. Some of the homes in the Calavera Canyon neighborhood were among those that were remediated.
4. Additional documentation is posted on EPA's website and can be found here:
http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/el_paso/tx_el_paso_index.html

Current Site Activities:

1. In November 2013, Malcolm Pirnie published the Supplemental Remedial Investigation.
2. Only one new sample of four (see Appendix F of the Supplemental RI) shows detections above regulatory screening levels. The new sample was taken on the ASARCO property and adjacent to the La Calavera neighborhood.
3. The new sample with detections above regulatory screening levels (see sample WP-SS5; Supplemental RI Figure 4-51) was collected from the 0 to 0.5 foot below ground surface (bgs) interval in the eastern part of the La Calavera Assessment Area (AA) and analyzed for site constituents of concern (COCs) and analytes of interest (AOIs).
 - a. Click here for Supplemental RI Figure 4-51: http://www.recastingthesmelter.com/wp-content/themes/recastingasarco/downloads/site_documents/Supplemental-RI-Report-11-12-2013/Figures/Fig-4-51-Mercury_SoilLocations_LaCalavera.pdf
4. This sample exceeded the SAI-Res standard for arsenic, lead and mercury; the concentrations are associated with a waste pile present at this location. This waste pile has been removed and disposed of in Cell 4.
5. The remainder of the La Calavera AA area (on ASARCO property) will be addressed in the near future. Before further actions are taken, the residents of the Calavera canyon neighborhood will be informed via door to door interaction.

Additional information about the site and the clean-up effort can be found on the Trust's website:
www.recastingthesmelter.com.

Roberto Puga
Custodial Trustee

Sources:

1. El Paso Memo:
2. Memo: Request a Ceiling Increase for the Time Critical Removal Action at the El Paso Country Metals Removal Site, El Paso, TX
http://www.epa.gov/region6/6sf/texas/el_paso/tx_el_paso_action_memo.pdf

3. Malcolm Pirnie- Supplemental RI, November 2013-
http://www.recastingthesmelter.com/wp-content/themes/recastingasarco/downloads/site_documents/Supplemental-RI-Report-11-12-2013/Final-Supplemental-Remedial-Investigation-Report_11122013.pdf