



**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Waste and Chemicals Management Division  
1650 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103**

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**EPA Finalizes Order to Exide/GBC to Investigate and Remove Contaminated Soils**

The United States Environmental Protection Agency, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, has finalized an agreement with Exide/General Battery Corporation to investigate the extent of lead contamination in the soils of properties surrounding the plant, which is located at Nolan Street and Spring Valley Road.

EPA has finalized the consent order to Exide after completing its review of all comments received from interested citizens during the comment period which closed on October 23, 2000.

Each person who commented on the proposed consent order and agreement will receive a copy of the EPA written response.

EPA has not changed any conditions of the order as it was proposed in September.

However, EPA has clarified certain issues and Agency expectations in the Response to Comments document. Of these issues, the most significant are: ecological assessment, residential indoor dust, and non-residential cleanup levels.

The EPA Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Order and Agreement requires Exide to clean up any property which contains lead above EPA-approved cleanup levels.

In the first phase of the project, Exide cleaned up nineteen properties adjacent to the facility. This work was required by a Consent Order and Agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in May 2000. This remediation was completed by the end of October.

In addition, Exide has tested

the soils of twenty-two properties located to the north of the facility to determine if lead contamination exists. Four of the twenty-two properties required no further action. The remaining properties will be evaluated further as part of the order.

The final order requires Exide to collect additional soil samples from other properties in the Laureldale/Muhlenberg Township to assess the extent of soil lead concentrations that are above EPA's screening levels of 400 ppm.

Each property, within the boundary of the determined cleanup levels, will be sampled for lead in the soil. Those properties identified as having lead concentrations above acceptable levels will be cleaned up.

The investigation and cleanup are expected to be completed by August 2005.

## Major Elements of the Response to Comments

### Ecological Assessments

Several people commented on the lack of an ecological assessment requirement in the order. Currently, EPA has no evidence there has been ecological damage caused by lead contamination resulting from Exide operations.

EPA believes the public health issues associated with residential soil lead must be our priority. Yet, we recognize the need to do an additional evaluation to determine if the lead contamination had an ecological impact on the surrounding area.

Therefore, EPA will evaluate any ecological impacts as part of a final remedy developed through Exide's corrective action permit.

### Indoor Lead

Several people requested that EPA require Exide to investigate and manage indoor lead dust at properties subject to soil excavation under this order.

EPA agrees that indoor lead levels will need to be evaluated to ensure that the threat to human health caused by lead contamination resulting from Exide operations is thoroughly eliminated.

Therefore, EPA will require that Exide include provisions in all Assessment and Remediation Work Plans. These provisions will include indoor dust sampling for lead, and subsequent cleanup for residential properties, where necessary.

### Non-Residential Cleanup Levels

For non-residential properties, EPA will allow Exide to propose cleanup levels based on current and reasonably anticipated future land use.

In some cases, this means that a property may have restrictions placed on future residential use. If this occurs, Exide will be expected to get the property owner's agreement with this restriction.

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## Public Participation Continues

Public participation is important to the completion of the investigation and cleanup. There will be future opportunities for the public to review and comment on the Assessment and Remediation Work Plans as the cleanup process continues.

A public meeting will be held

to present the content of the proposed work plans and to respond to any questions from interested citizens.

The Work Plans will be available for review at the Muhlenberg Community Library and the EPA Region III Office.

## History of the Site

The Exide Facility occupies approximately 50 acres of land just north of Reading, PA. The facility, located at Nolan Street and Spring Valley Road, began operating as a battery manufacturing plant in the mid-1930s under the ownership of the Bowers Battery Company.

General Battery Corporation purchased the facility in 1958, which was later acquired by Exide in 1987.

The facility currently recycles lead batteries. Spent lead-acid batteries are sent to a battery breaker unit where lead, plastic, and acid are separated.

The recycled lead is smelted and cast into lead-alloy bars to make new battery plates.

As a result of approximately 35 years of lead smelter operations prior to the installation of air pollution controls and the advent of the Clean Air Act of 1970, general plant operations contributed to lead contamination in soils in the surrounding areas of the facility.

Currently, the Exide plant operates in compliance with Air Permits issued by the PA Bureau of Air Quality.

*EPA's Administrative Order and Consent Agreement and the Response to Comments Document can be viewed at: <http://www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/ca/pa/pad990753089.htm>*