

IMPORTANT CAPTAINS FLAT COMMUNITY NOTICE



On behalf of the NSW Government, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) will be in Captains Flat over the next few weeks carrying out precautionary testing in public and community spaces to check for lead beyond the former Lake George Mine.

Testing has already been carried out on parts of the rail corridor and elevated levels of lead were found.

In addition to the questions and answers below, drop-in community information sessions will be held at the Captains Flat Community Hall on Monday 8 February (2-7pm) and Tuesday 9 February (2-7pm) if you wish to speak to someone face-to-face. Representatives from the NSW EPA, NSW Health, Transport for NSW, Department of Regional NSW, Crown Lands, Local Land Services and the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council will be on-site to answer your questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

THE MINE AND ENVIRONMENT

Q. Where did the lead come from?

- A.** The Lake George Mine produced lead, zinc, copper, pyrite, silver and gold. When mining operations commenced in the area over 120 years ago, standards for environmental protection like dust management were very different. Highly mineralised soil and dust would have been spread around the mine site during its operation, and at the loading site in the rail corridor. Waste was also stockpiled on the mine site and it is not known how far soil and dust from the mine site and rail corridor may have spread.

Q. Where have the elevated levels of lead been located?

- A.** Elevated levels of lead are present on the former Lake George Mine site and were recently identified in the rail corridor. The elevated levels of lead found in the rail corridor has likely come from the transport of ore extracted from the former Lake George Mine into rail trucks.

Q. What has the NSW Government done to manage the former mine site?

- A.** Since the mine's closure in 1962, the NSW Government has undertaken significant work to remediate the site, including erosion control, stabilising and capping tailings, drainage improvements, removal of contaminated material and other safety works. Planned works will involve capping bare areas on the mine site and pursuing options to treat water coming from the mine.

TESTING FOR LEAD

Q. Are more tests being carried out in Captains Flat?

- A.** Yes. The NSW EPA will test soil from publicly owned land in Captains Flat, including the school, community hall and parks. The NSW EPA is also available to test privately owned properties.

Q. Why are more tests being done?

- A.** While elevated levels of lead in and around the site of a former lead-producing mine are not unexpected, the NSW Government wants to investigate levels of lead beyond the former mine site and rail corridor.

If the results show elevated levels, the NSW Government will work with the community to ensure they know what actions they can take to live safely with lead.

Q. How is testing being managed?

- A.** NSW Government agencies including NSW EPA, Transport for NSW, NSW Health, Department of Regional NSW and Crown Lands, are working together with Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council to carry out further testing for lead in the area.

Q. Can I get my property tested for lead?

A. Yes. Landholders can contact the NSW EPA for free soil testing. To enquire or arrange a test please contact the Environment Line on 131 555.

Q. How long do the tests take? When will the results be available?

A. NSW EPA staff will be in Captains Flat to test soil from 2 February. Using specialist equipment, the NSW EPA will screen soil to get an early indication of lead levels at the time of testing. If elevated levels are indicated, soil will be sent to a lab for further testing to confirm the level of lead. Landholders that consent to soil testing on their land will be provided with a report within six weeks from the day of testing.

Q. Will the results be made public?

A. All results from the rail corridor and public lands testing will be shared. Results from private properties will be shared with the landowner, the local council and NSW Government agencies involved in managing lead in Captains Flat.

Q. If an elevated level of lead is found on my property, what happens next?

A. If elevated lead levels are discovered on your property, the NSW EPA will help you understand the results and practical things you can do around your home or business to minimise your exposure to lead, such as washing your hands regularly or covering patches of bare soil with grass or mulch to prevent dust.

PERSONAL HEALTH

**Q. How likely is it that I or someone in my family has been exposed to lead?
How can I be tested?**

A. The likelihood that a person has been exposed is dependent on several factors including the level of lead in the immediate environment and activities that could increase exposure, the length of exposure and the person's age and general health.

If you are concerned about possible exposure to high levels of lead, please see your local GP to request a blood test. You can request this test to be bulk billed.

Q. Can people live safely with lead in their community?

A. Yes. Broken Hill in the far west of NSW is one example of a mining community successfully living with lead. There are practical ways to manage potential exposure to lead in and around the home, such as washing your hands regularly, using raised garden beds and covering exposed dirt with turf or mulch to prevent dust being carried by the wind.

Q. Where can I get more information around the risks associated with lead exposure and how I can manage it?

A. Advice on how to avoid lead exposure can be found on the NSW EPA website at epa.nsw.gov.au/leadsafety. Information about potential health issues associated with lead exposure is available on the NSW Health website at health.nsw.gov.au/environment/factsheets/Pages/lead-exposure-children.aspx.

MORE INFORMATION

Q. I have questions. Who can I talk to about this?

A. Representatives from the NSW EPA, NSW Health, Transport for NSW, Crown Lands, Local Land Services, Department of Regional NSW and the Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council will be available to answer questions at community drop-in sessions at the Captains Flat Community Hall on Monday 8 February (2-7pm) and Tuesday 9 February (2-7pm).

Q. Where can I find more information?

A. Information about lead testing in Captains Flat is available at epa.nsw.gov.au/captainsflat. Alternatively, you can call EPA's Environment Line on 131 555 or email info@environment.nsw.gov.au.