

LeFevre Peninsula Primary School Dust Issue

Frequently Asked Questions

What is benzo(a)pyrene?

A chemical by-product of burning, e.g. cigarette smoke, fossil fuels, bushfires, burnt food. It is found everywhere in the environment in small amounts.

Is it harmful?

In the case of LeFevre, the dose is low and the duration of exposure has been short. We will limit future exposure by appropriate cleaning of the school and reduced dust production.

Only with very long periods of exposure (20 to 40 years) and with high concentrations — such as found in the past in smelters and foundries — is it known to cause cancer.

What happens if I breathe in dust containing benzo(a)pyrene?

This depends on the level in the dust. At LeFevre School, the level is not sufficient to cause acute health effects or significant ongoing health effects.

I have a child who goes to LeFevre School – will they have been exposed to this?

Yes, but we are all exposed to low levels every day in our normal environments. The issue is reducing the potential for ongoing exposure from the higher than acceptable levels in the dust.

What should I do – should I take them to a GP to be checked?

There are no particular tests available to check for the chemical in the body or for exposure to the chemical. However if you have particular concerns about aspects of your child's health then your GP may be able to provide advice.

Are there any symptoms that I should look out for?

No.

I've lived in the area for years - am I now more likely to get cancer?

The level of benzo(a)pyrene in the dust — and the short duration of exposure — is not sufficient to cause acute health effects or significant ongoing health effects.

What is being done to minimise the amount of dust affecting the LeFevre Peninsula Primary School?

The Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment Project has implemented a number of actions that will minimise the amount of dust that leaves its site.

Some requirements of the plan include:

- regular watering of trafficked areas
- regular sweeping of the site entrance
- application and reapplication of dust suppressant to all stockpiles and exposed surfaces within the stockpiled area
- the active use of water to control dust in areas where excavation and earthworks are being undertaken
- installation of screening materials to all chain mesh fences surrounding the stockpile areas.

The Land Management Corporation (LMC) has a contractual arrangement with the Newport Quays consortium which requires them to remediate the land, following which Newport Quays undertake the development of the site. LMC has committed to ongoing dust monitoring by an independent firm to allow it to better manage the activities on the site.

LMC will engage contractors during the September/October school holidays to undertake a thorough cleaning of the school to remove existing dust.

Will the stockpiles be moved away from the school?

LMC is currently investigating options to relocate as much of the stockpiled soil away from the school as possible. Proposals to relocate the soil are expected to be received from LMC in the near future.

What is in the large stockpiles adjacent to the school?

LMC has advised the EPA that the soil in the large stockpiles adjacent to the school was tested prior to being placed and that these stockpiles meet the EPA's waste fill criteria. Soil that meets the EPA's waste fill criteria is generally able to be used in a variety of circumstances, including residential developments.

How long will the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment Project take to be finished?

The Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project commenced in 2005 and will be undertaken over an extended period of approximately 12 to 14 years in eight proposed development precincts. Current works are occurring in Precinct 2 and will move in a north then easterly direction around the Port Adelaide River.

What chemicals are in the soil on the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project site, how did these chemicals get there and what risk do they pose to offsite persons?

Contamination at the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project site has been present for many decades. It is likely that some of the contamination has been present at the site for over 100 years.

Contamination associated with fill material (soil) at the site comes from a variety of sources and includes:

- industrial wastes (resulting from a former sugar refining, foundry activities, sands and slags)

- materials from building and demolition
- soils dredged from the Port Adelaide River

Site Audit Reports issued for various sections of the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project site have identified elevated concentrations of some heavy metals, petroleum hydrocarbons and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in certain areas of the site. Providing these chemical substances are managed appropriately and contained onsite they will not pose a risk to surrounding land users.

When did the EPA become aware of the dust issue?

The EPA received one complaint about dust from the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project site from a resident in February 2008. No further complaints were received until June 2008 when an article in the Portside Messenger reported that the school was concerned about dust levels. EPA immediately initiated contact with the school upon learning of the Messenger article.

What action has the EPA taken to date?

Since learning of the school's concerns, the EPA has conducted several site inspections. The EPA has also met with representatives of the school and parents of children at the school to discuss their concerns. Meetings have been held with the LMC and the Newport Quays Consortium to gain commitment to implementing the environmental management plan for the redevelopment site and to undertake a number of additional measures to reduce dust emissions from the site (see FAQ "What is being done to minimise the amount of dust affecting the LeFevre Peninsula Primary School?" for further information on these measures).

I live near to the school – what does this mean for me?

The Department of Health has advised that residents living adjacent to the Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment project should keep their houses cleaned to a normal standard. Providing that this occurs, there should be no cause for concern.

What about my vegetables and my fruit trees?

Based on the monitoring undertaken at the school, there is no evidence to suggest that there is a health risk to the local community in the vicinity. Fruit and vegetables grown in domestic gardens are unlikely to present any health risk arising from the dust being present.

Whilst the Department of Health is not concerned about domestic vegetables or the effects of the dust on vegetables grown at the school, it has recommended that the school vegetable garden be assessed to make sure food grown in the garden is safe for consumption by the school children.

Why weren't the dust concerns dealt with earlier by the EPA?

The EPA will always respond to the concerns of the public. In this case, there was only one complaint from a resident between January and June, a very low level of complaint for a development of this nature. Nevertheless, this complaint was referred onto the LMC.

As soon as the EPA was made aware, through media coverage, of the concerns of the School community, it contacted the School and began its investigation.

As well as responding to public complaints, the EPA continually monitors air quality around the metropolitan area and conducts its own inspections regularly on projects such as this.