Missouri Poison Center Shares Guidance on Potential Lead Exposure Following Detonation of Lead Azide in Iowa.

Environmental lead is the primary health concern, but it is related only to long term intake; practical precautions can help reduce exposure to lead-containing dust.

ST. LOUIS, Mo. (Nov. 24, 2026) – The Missouri Poison Center is providing guidance for Missouri residents regarding potential community exposure following the detonation in Iowa of materials containing lead azide. The azide is not a concern, but it is possible that the wind may carry lead particles into parts of Missouri.

Lead azide has been used to quick-start the other explosives that are part of a weapon, but this stock is no longer suitable and has to be eliminated. This is done by carefully planning and controlling its detonation. The azide will be converted into a normal part of the air we breathe, but the lead will be released into the air where it will travel based on the wind direction and speed. It will eventually fall to the ground or other surfaces. The lead content in the air will rapidly decrease as it travels because it mixes with the huge amount of fresh air and disperses. The amount of lead that falls to the ground also gets lower and lower as the plume disperses.

Although lead poisoning is a serious health concern in young children and pregnant and nursing women, it takes repeated intake over weeks, months, or years. Brief exposure to lead in air, water, or on soil or surfaces will not be a medical emergency.

What Missouri Residents Need to Know

Any lead that may travel after the detonation **will not cause immediate health effects in most people**. People with asthma or other lung conditions who live in the direct area of the plume from the detonation may find their problem temporarily worsened from the extra dust in the air, just as they might from air pollution.

After the dust has settled, environmental sampling results will help determine whether long-term exposure concerns exist and whether additional public health actions or testing recommendations are needed. If environmental testing identifies significant ongoing lead contamination, healthcare providers may recommend blood lead testing for some individuals who live in the area, specifically,

- Children younger than 6 years of age,
- Pregnant individuals.

Older children and other adults are considered resistant to the effect of lead and most likely will not be tested. Women who are breastfeeding are advised to continue doing so because the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any small risk from lead.

Treatment is not given to anyone unless the blood lead test comes back exceptionally high. The body will quickly remove any lead in the blood over a period of weeks to months.
The actions to be taken are to identify and to reduce or eliminate the sources of the lead intake.

Optional Recommendations to Reduce Exposure for Young Children and Pregnant Women who Live Close to the Detonation Site in Middletown, Iowa

During and Immediately After the Detonation

- Stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed.
- Turn off heating systems that draw in outside air OR set them to recirculate indoor air.
- Consider using portable air cleaners equipped with HEPA filters.
- Limit unnecessary travel through potentially affected areas.
- If driving is necessary, keep windows closed and set vehicle ventilation to recirculate air.

After Officials Indicate It Is Safe to Resume Normal Activities

- Remove shoes at the door to avoid tracking dust indoors.
- Consider washing vehicles that were parked outdoors.
- Clean surfaces with a wet cloth or mop.
- It is best not to dry dust or sweep, as this can stir dust into the air.
- Wash hands frequently, especially children's hands, and wash them before eating.
- Wash outdoor toys and play equipment.
- Thoroughly wash fruits and vegetables grown outdoors before eating.

- Limit children's play in bare soil until environmental testing results are available.

When to Seek Medical Attention

- People without symptoms do not need to see a doctor or go to the emergency room.
- Individuals who live in an area that has been identified as contaminated and are concerned about exposure should contact their healthcare provider to discuss whether blood lead testing is appropriate.
- As is always true, anyone experiencing severe symptoms such as confusion, difficulty talking, difficulty moving, unusual sleepiness, shortness of breath, chest pain or similarly worrisome symptoms, should seek immediate medical evaluation.

Healthcare professionals may contact the Missouri Poison Center for consultation regarding lead exposure concerns and interpretation of blood lead levels.

Additional Information and Resources

U.S. Army Detonation Information, Maps, and Updates
ASC Installation Community Notifications
https://www.army.mil/asc#org-iowa-army-ammunition-plant

Missouri Lead Poisoning Information
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
https://health.mo.gov/living/environment/lead/

Emotional Support and Crisis Resources

Feeling anxious, stressed, or uncertain during situations involving environmental contamination is common. Support is available 24 hours a day:

- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990
- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: Call or text 988

About the Missouri Poison Center

The Missouri Poison Center provides free, expert treatment advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week for poison exposures, medication questions, and toxicology emergencies.

For questions about potential lead exposure or any poisoning concern, call **1-800-222-1222**. Poison specialists are available around the clock to assist the public and healthcare professionals.