



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Third-Party Report Finds Samples of Soil, Leaves, Surfaces in Area Affected by Controlled Burn
Below Level of Concern for Lead**

Bloomington, Ind. - A detailed third-party [report](#) delivered late Friday, December 10 concluded that samples of air, surface dust, surface soil and leaf litter collected in the vicinity of a recent controlled burn exhibited no lead contamination in excess of state and federal standards, and recommended that no further action is warranted.

The report was published by VET Environmental Engineering (VET), with whom the City contracted to provide lead abatement oversight, confirmatory investigations, and reporting, including coordination of abatement activities with clean-up contractor Environmental Assurance Company, Inc. (EACI), area air sampling during abatement activities, and confirmatory post-abatement soil sampling analyzed by an independent laboratory. Activities responded to

areas where debris was dispersed after the Bloomington Fire Department's (BFD) November 5 controlled burn of a residence on South High Street conducted to provide training to firefighters.

VET's report stated: "All lead abatement and confirmatory sampling was conducted in accordance with applicable published guidelines....It is VET's professional opinion that further investigation of lead contamination at the site is not warranted."

Additionally, the Monroe County Health Department confirmed that blood samples collected from firefighters who operated at the burn and from residents who sought testing at a voluntary, free site on December 4, did not indicate any elevated levels of lead.

The VET report, available at

<https://data.bloomington.in.gov/dataset/lead-abatement-oversight-confirmatory-investigation-and-reporting>, contained the following findings:

- Visible paint chips deposited in the area as a result of the burn were confirmed to be lead-based paint (LBP).
- 13 area air samples collected exhibited no detection of lead in the air, including during abatement activities.
- Surface dust readings conducted using x-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) showed non-excessive levels of lead dust contamination.
- All 56 surface soil samples collected were within the published background range of lead in soils according to Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) guidelines. None of the samples exceeded 200 parts per million (ppm) for lead. IDEM requires action to be taken if lead levels exceed 400 ppm.
- Analysis of the leaf litter exhibited no detection of lead, indicating that leachable lead was not present in detectable quantities. As such, the leaf litter did not constitute hazardous waste but was within normal parameters for disposal at a landfill. In an abundance of caution, the City did not compost leaves collected in the affected area as per usual practice.

The BFD completed a controlled live burn training at 1213 South High Street November 2-5 after receiving [approval](#) from IDEM. Approved by the City for demolition, the two-story house at that address was donated by the owners for use by the BFD as an opportunity to conduct live fire training. The controlled burn had the unanticipated consequence of transporting ash and other debris, including paint flakes, to the residential neighborhood west of the burn site due to prevailing wind conditions (see this [map](#) of the affected area). Upon learning of the dispersal,

BFD immediately coordinated with IDEM and Monroe County Emergency Management to address any potential lead contamination; personally connected with property owners and made resources for abatement available to them; and contracted with VET and EACI to conduct the evaluation and abatement of a total of 111 properties.

This training exercise provided 94 Bloomington firefighters, many recently hired, invaluable experience. But in light of the community impact, Bloomington Fire Chief Jason Moore has stated no similar live-fire training should be conducted in the future. Chief Moore is working with the director of the Indiana Fire & Public Safety Academy and IDEM officials to ensure that lessons learned from this controlled burn are openly discussed in an effort to inform future approval processes or guidance to the state's fire departments.

The BFD invites residents with concerns about elevated lead levels to request an appointment for finger-prick blood testing at BFD headquarters (226 South College Avenue) through December 17 at 812-332-9763. More information about the City's actions in response to the controlled burn is available at bloomington.in.gov/bfdburninfo or by contacting Bloomington Fire Chief Jason Moore at firechief@bloomington.in.gov.