

April 16, 2009 Kelly Dixon of the ODEQ said they do not recognize the use of a X-Ray Florescent Sampler.

Maroons top Chisholm
See Sports, P7

Additional soil samples to be taken in Blackwell

By TERRY GROOVER
J-T Managing Editor

One Blackwell neighborhood and five "hot spots" will be given an additional once-over by officials from the Department of Environmental Quality and Mintech within the next few weeks.

Monty Elder, senior environmental specialist for DEQ, told residents attending a public hearing on Tuesday that six areas will be sampled using a highly sophisticated testing device called an X-ray Florescent sampler. The samples will be taken to try to determine how much soil is contaminated with lead and cadmium from the Blackwell Zinc Smelter.

"We will be doing some additional tests. They will be in areas where there might be problems," Ms. Elder said.

The neighborhood in question is located from 13th Street east on Lincoln to 10th Street and north to McKinley. Additional testing will

also be done where "hot spots" were found. Those locations are at 6th and Blackwell Avenue; 9th and Dewey; Doolin Avenue between 9th and 6th Streets, south; 600 block of 13th Street, 21st Street north and west of Ferguson and 18th Street north and east of Ferguson.

The locations for the sampling with the XRF were determined by findings during soil samplings conducted last fall by Mintech. All of those areas had levels above 500 parts per million of lead or levels above 30 ppm for cadmium.

According to Tom Terbonik of Mintech, the company will begin using the XRF during the next few weeks and will be sampling at 200-foot intervals. The XRF, Terbonik said, will provide the company with immediate results, unlike the previous samplings which had to be sent to a laboratory.

"It will tell us what the level is immediately. It is more detailed,

quicker and more cost-effective," he said.

According to officials, representatives will be contacting residents of the affected areas to get permission to do the sampling.

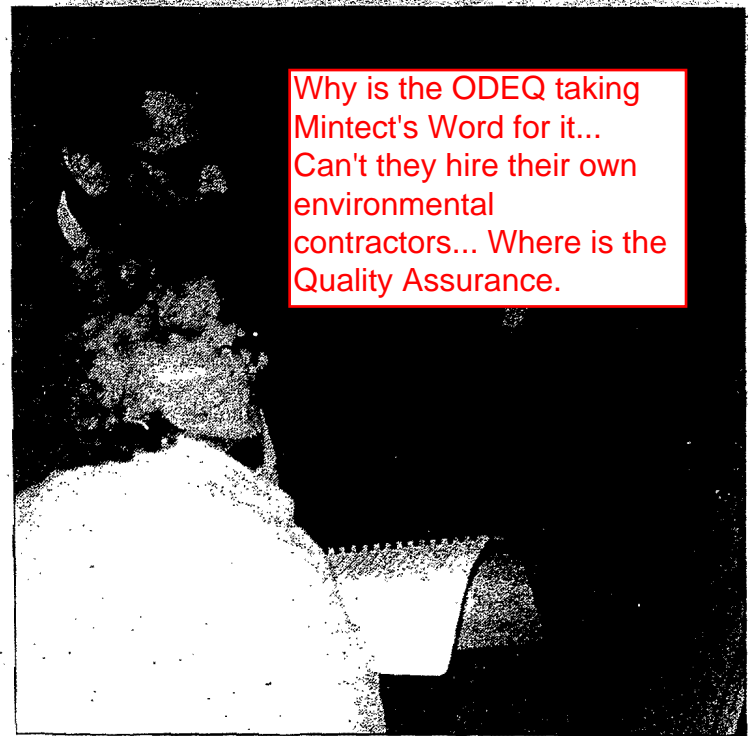
"They will be visited to give permission to use the machine to find out if there is a problem, and if so, how much of a problem," he said.

According to Ms. Elder, approximately 120 points will be tested in the area. That will cover approximately 200 residences.

Terbonik said his company is continuing to do soil samples in the area and are trying to define how bad the contamination is.

Terbonik said in many of the cases where high levels of lead or cadmium were found in the soil, it is believed the readings are from residue. The XRF will help confirm that belief because the company will be able to receive the results

(Please see SOIL, P10)



Why is the ODEQ taking Mintech's Word for it... Can't they hire their own environmental contractors... Where is the Quality Assurance.

MAPPING IT OUT — Tom Terbonik of Mintech points out the location of a house owned by Pearl Carruth of Blackwell before public meeting Tuesday. (J-T photo by TLG)

Soil

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immediately.

Should a high level be shown, additional areas will be tested to determine if it is from residue or if the contamination is widespread.

Ms. Elder said the DEQ will take the information gathered from the sampling to determine if a problem does exist and if so, how wide of an area does it cover and what the next step should be to remedy the problem.

Of the 140 samples that have previously been taken, (100 by EPA and 40 by Mintech), only about 24 showed "slightly elevated levels for lead," said Ms. Elder. The others were below the recommended levels.

The highest reading was 1,850 parts per million.

Also, she pointed out there is

Area Stocks

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cadmium in an aquifer that goes from the Industrial Park to the south and east. No one is using the aquifer for drinking water, she said. And it is not a part of the local water system.

"We are trying to be as protective as possible to human health. We know we can't eliminate risks, but we want the risks to be as low as possible," said Ms. Elder.

Scott Thompson, an environmental specialist for the DEQ, said the state is not looking at this situation as an emergency situation, but residents should be aware of the situation.

"If we (DEQ) felt that it was emergency situation, we would have taken some preventative action. We are dealing with a long-term situation," Thompson said.

Ms. Elder said the biggest concern deals with children between the ages of six months and six years because that is when the nervous system is forming. A number of children were tested for higher than normal lead levels in their blood recently. The results showed normal levels in most instances.

Normal contact with the soil, she said, is not a concern. The problem

occurs when children ingest the dirt.

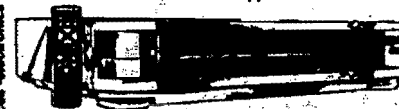
Ms. Elder said there are ways to limit the possibility of taking dirt into the system.

"Be a little more diligent about washing your hands. Separate the outside toys and inside toys, take your shoes off before you go into the house, wash your window sills and surfaces with a high-phosphate detergent (dish soap) and rinse off the sidewalks will eliminate exposure," Ms. Elder said.

"It will make a big difference on exposure. We don't know what is out there," she said.

Concern has arisen because soil from the smelter site was used at various locations throughout Blackwell as fill material.

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