

Soil removal ordered for homes near J.H. Baxter plant in Eugene

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The J.H. Baxter wood treatment plant in Eugene, 2021.

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Dioxin levels detected around the J.H. Baxter plant in Eugene have spurred the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to order the removal of soil from neighboring residences.

Soil samples taken last September and October from seven properties showed concerning levels of dioxins, so DEQ will have the soil removed from all but one this summer.

Dioxins are toxic chemical compounds tied to adverse health effects, including the increased risk of cancer. DEQ spokesperson Dylan Darling says they're still learning the extent of the toxins around the wood processing facility.

"A second phase of soil sampling on residential properties is expected to take place soon," Darling told KLCC. "This additional sampling will help determine the extent of the contamination north, west, and east of those initial seven properties."

Affected residents have been notified of the dioxin levels found in their yards, and are being advised how to minimize risk ahead of the soil removal.



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A long fence and posted notices bar visitors from Trainsong Park in Eugene.

Meanwhile, the unexpected discovery of elevated levels of dioxin in the soil led the City of Eugene to temporarily close Trainsong Park yesterday. But for now, there's no connection between these findings and those involving the Baxter facility.

Darling says more analysis is necessary.

"We basically just need to know a lot more about the park. Just figure out what the situation might be there, 'cause of the distance from the facility, and some of the sampling we have between here and there. So that's why we're saying it's currently unknown."

The Oregon Health Authority says a family with young children would have to visit Trainsong Park four days a week for an entire year before there would be any health

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Brian Bull joined the KLCC News Team in June 2016. In his 25 years as a public media journalist, he's worked at NPR, Twin Cities Public Television, South Dakota Public Broadcasting, Wisconsin Public Radio, and ideastream in Cleveland. His reporting has netted dozens of accolades, including four national Edward R. Murrow Awards (17 regional), the Ohio Associated Press' Best Reporter Award, Best Radio Reporter from the Native American Journalists Association, and the PRNDI/NEFE Award for Excellence in Consumer Finance Reporting.

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