

Lead Air Pollution

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Basic Information about Lead Air Pollution

On this page

- How does lead get in the air?
- What are the effects of lead on human health?
- What are the effects of lead on ecosystems?

How does lead get in the air?

Sources of lead emissions vary from one area to another. At the national level, major sources of lead in the air are ore and metals processing and piston-engine aircraft operating on leaded aviation fuel. Other sources are waste incinerators, utilities, and lead-acid battery manufacturers. The highest air concentrations of lead are usually found near lead smelters.

As a result of EPA's regulatory efforts including the removal of lead from motor vehicle gasoline, levels of lead in the air decreased by 98 percent between 1980 and 2014.

What are the effects of lead on human health?

Once taken into the body, lead distributes throughout the body in the blood and is accumulated in the bones. Depending on the level of exposure, lead can adversely affect the nervous system, kidney function, immune system, reproductive and developmental systems and the cardiovascular system. Lead exposure also affects the oxygen carrying capacity of the blood. The lead effects most likely to be encountered in current populations are neurological effects in children. Infants and young children are especially sensitive to lead exposures, which may contribute to behavioral problems, learning deficits and lowered IQ.

- Learn more about lead health impacts <https://epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead#effects>.

What are the effects of lead on ecosystems?

Lead is persistent in the environment and can be added to soils and sediments through deposition from sources of lead air pollution. Other sources of lead to ecosystems include direct discharge of waste streams to water bodies and mining. Elevated lead in the environment can result in decreased growth and reproduction in plants and animals, and neurological effects in vertebrates.

More about Lead

- What is lead? <<https://epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead#lead>>
- Where is lead found? <<https://epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead#found>>

[Lead Air Pollution Home <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution)

Lead Basics

[Setting and Reviewing Lead Standards <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/setting-and-reviewing-standards-control-lead-pb-pollution>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/setting-and-reviewing-standards-control-lead-pb-pollution)

[Lead Standards Setting Regulatory Actions <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-lead-pb>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-lead-pb)

[Implementing Lead Standards <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/applying-or-implementing-lead-pb-standards>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/applying-or-implementing-lead-pb-standards)

[Lead Implementation Regulatory Actions <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/2008-lead-pb-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-implementation-actions>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/2008-lead-pb-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-implementation-actions)

[SIP Checklist <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/lead-state-implementation-plan-sip-checklist-guide>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/lead-state-implementation-plan-sip-checklist-guide)

[SIP Training and Assistance <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/lead-pb-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-implementation-training-and>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/lead-pb-national-ambient-air-quality-standards-naaqs-implementation-training-and)

[Implementation Data and Reports <https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/technical-data-and-reports-lead-measurements-and-sip-status>](https://epa.gov/lead-air-pollution/technical-data-and-reports-lead-measurements-and-sip-status)

[Information for Other Criteria Air Pollutants <https://epa.gov/criteria-air-pollutants>](https://epa.gov/criteria-air-pollutants)

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