



## Vasquez Boulevard & Interstate 70 Superfund Site (VB/I-70)

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The Vasquez Boulevard & Interstate 70 (VB/I-70) Superfund site is approximately 4 square miles located in northeast Denver, Colorado. The site includes two commercial/industrial areas as well as residential properties in all or part of the following neighborhoods: Cole, Clayton, Swansea/Elyria, southwest Globeville and northern Curtis Park. Historically, the area was a major smelting center for the Rocky Mountain West. Two smelting plants—Omaha & Grant and Argo—operated at the site for varying lengths of time, beginning as early as the 1870s, refining gold, silver, copper, lead and zinc. As a result, heavy metals were deposited in area soils at levels that, in some cases, posed a health risk to people living there. Groundwater was also impacted at the two

former smelter locations. In January 1999, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed the Vasquez Boulevard / Interstate 70 (VB/I-70) site on the National Priorities List (NPL). Sites on the NPL are commonly referred to as Superfund Sites because they are eligible for Superfund resources, environmental investigation and cleanup processes, and public participation opportunities. EPA is working cooperatively with the Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE) on site activities. EPA divided the VB/I-70 site into three operable units to better manage the project. These are described as follows:

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### Operable Unit 1 (OU1) - Residential Soils

#### **Contaminants of Concern: Lead and Arsenic in Soils**

#### **Status of Cleanup: Complete**

In 1998, EPA and CDPHE began investigating yards to determine if heavy metal residues from past smelting operations posed a potential threat to the health of residents in nearby neighborhoods. The investigation showed elevated lead and arsenic concentrations in some yards. In 2003, EPA issued its final cleanup decision: EPA would sample every yard and clean up the yards with lead and/or arsenic concentrations that posed a risk to residents living there. A vast residential soils sampling and cleanup project ensued. The majority of yards sampled had results below EPA's levels of concern and did not require any further action. However, about 1 in 5 yards sampled did require further action due to elevated levels of lead and/or arsenic. At these properties, EPA removed contaminated soil, replaced the yard with clean soil, and re-landscaped. In all, EPA sampled more than 4,500 properties, and removed and replaced soil at about 800 of those yards that needed it. In addition to soil sampling, removal, replacement, and re-landscaping, EPA provided for a lead paint assessment and abatement program to ensure that lead paint peeling from the exterior of a home did not recontaminate soil. EPA also sponsored a Community Health Program which was a unique program designed by local, federal, and state government representatives and committed community leaders. The city of Denver administered the program, which included door-to-door visits from community members trained to become

Community Health Workers and provided education to area residents on the hazards of lead, arsenic and a range of other environmentally-related topics. In all, EPA sampled more than 4,500 properties, 99 percent, and cleaned up about 800 of those that required it. For the nearly 50 properties where EPA was never able to gain access to sample and/or cleanup, measures are in place to ensure that current residents and future buyers are informed.

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## Operable Unit 2 (OU2) - Omaha & Grant Smelter

**Contaminants of Concern: Heavy metals in soils and groundwater**

**Status of Cleanup: Groundwater Studies Ongoing**

The former Omaha & Grant Smelter location (OU2) today includes the Denver Coliseum and surrounding businesses. In 1992, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment began assessing for environmental contamination at the former Omaha & Grant Smelter location. In 2000, EPA initiated a separate investigation of the smelter facilities. The city and county of Denver, with EPA and state oversight, later conducted a thorough remedial investigation that assessed potential heavy metals contamination in the soils, groundwater, surface water, and sediments. EPA conducted additional groundwater sampling in 2012 and 2013.

EPA is also working with the city and county of Denver (CCOD) on CCOD's plans to upgrade the stormwater management infrastructure to meet a 100-year flood capacity. EPA is involved with the portion of the stormwater management infrastructure that traverses OU2 in the vicinity of the Denver Coliseum. This upgrade will likely require the excavation of potentially contaminated materials. Following EPA protocol, CCOD will conduct the work while ensuring that protective measures are taken to address any potential releases of, or worker exposure to, hazardous substances. EPA and CDPHE are overseeing CCOD's work on this removal action.

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## Operable Unit 3 (OU3) - Argo Smelter

**Contaminants of Concern: Heavy metals in soils and groundwater**

**Status of Cleanup: Groundwater Studies Ongoing**

In 1992, the CDPHE began assessing for environmental contamination at the former Argo smelter. OU3 is located at northwest corner of the intersection of Interstate 70 and Interstate 25. At issue is whether smelter generated wastes, primarily heavy metals, buried at the site pose a risk to future construction workers or groundwater. The majority of the OU3 area is paved and has been extensively redeveloped since the smelter stopped operating. EPA is conducting ongoing groundwater studies as part of the remedial investigation.

### **Contacts**

For more information about the VB/I-70 Superfund Site, please contact the following representatives or visit our Website at <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/vb-i70>

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