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EPA, MDEQ to sample Saginaw residential area for dioxin contamination

(Chicago- Apr. 2, 2008) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 5 and Michigan Department of Environmental Quality have begun screening a residential neighborhood in Saginaw Mich., for dioxin-contaminated soil.

An estimated 10 residential properties in an area along the Tittabawassee River will be sampled. Small plugs from up to 36 inches below surface level will be sent for laboratory analysis. Analysis may take two to three weeks. Once the data is returned, EPA and MDEQ, along with Michigan Department of Community Health, will consider a range of options, including more comprehensive sampling in the area and possible cleanup actions.

"Residential soil contamination is a serious matter," said Associate Superfund Director Ralph Dollhopf. "At this time of year, children are playing outside again and families are planning gardens. If action is needed, this project will ramp up very quickly."

The investigation aims to determine the extent of dioxin contamination present in the neighborhood. The project was prompted by Dow Chemical Co.'s February 2008 disclosure to the agencies of an elevated dioxin level found in a residential soil sample collected by Dow in November 2007. Under the company's Michigan operating license, MDEQ required Dow to conduct certain soil and embankment sampling along the Middle Branch of the Tittabawassee River.

Dow's Midland facility is a 1,900-acre chemical manufacturing plant. Dioxins and furans are byproducts from the manufacture of chlorine-based products. Past waste disposal practices, emissions and incineration at Dow have resulted in on and off-site dioxin and furan contamination.

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