

Battery casings at residential sites

The lead-acid batteries used in cars and trucks contain valuable lead plates and strong acids that can be removed and recycled. Currently, the outer plastic casing of such batteries are either recycled or properly disposed. Historically, though the lead plates and acid were usually recycled, the casings were often discarded. Most casings in Minnesota were disposed into landfills, but some were used in residential construction as foundation or wall blocks, and others were crushed and used as fill underneath driveways, septic tanks, and septic drain fields.

Homeowners and contractors may find these battery casings or fragments when performing repairs or excavation. This fact sheet explains the requirements and recommendations of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) when battery casings are found at residential sites. Counties, townships, and cities may also have additional local requirements and recommendations.

What are the dangers?

Lead is a toxic pollutant that can cause harm to exposed children and adults. Lead residue may leach from contaminated battery casings into the soil when buried and surrounding materials such as concrete or wood when used as a construction material. Repair, demolition, or excavation of lead-contaminated materials may then expose residents, contractors, and the public to the lead residue. The Minnesota Department of Health has more information available on lead health hazards. See [More information](#) on page 2.

What are my responsibilities?

If you are a homeowner who discovers battery casings or fragments on your property, or a contractor working on a residential property who discovers them, you must:

- Notify the Minnesota Duty Officer immediately by calling 651-649-5451 or 1-800-422-0798.
- If you are a contractor, ensure all your employees at the site who may be exposed to lead are informed of their potential exposure and are provided with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). For more information on employee health and safety requirements, contact the Minnesota Occupational Safety & Health Administration (MNOSHA). See [More information](#) on page 2.
- Homeowners may also be required to notify any subsequent purchasers of their home of the presence of battery casings or lead contamination. The MPCA recommends that homeowners consult a qualified real estate attorney to determine their legal obligations if the house is sold.

What additional steps does the MPCA recommend?

Inappropriate removal techniques can spread lead contamination at a site and exposure to remaining lead may present a continuing health risk at the site. In addition, inappropriate removal that causes additional contamination may subject the property owner to liability for the environmental damage. For these reasons, the MPCA recommends that homeowners assess their site and remediation options with a qualified environmental consultant. Potential options may include encapsulation in-place, removal, or complete site remediation.

Because local units of government may have requirements or recommendations beyond those of the MPCA discussed in this fact sheet, as well as potential resources, the MPCA recommends that homeowners also contact their city, township, or county government.

What MPCA resources are available?

Unfortunately, the MPCA does not have funds for homeowners to use to test or clean up their property. If the battery casings or lead contamination extend across numerous properties, are related to a nearby commercial property cleanup, or affect surface water or drinking water, the MPCA may be able to review the site for inclusion in the state's Superfund Program; however this can be a lengthy process and does not guarantee that any cleanup will ultimately be funded.

Under the MPCA's Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program, homeowners may request that the MPCA review assessment and cleanup plans prepared by a qualified environmental consultant. The VIC Program does not prepare assessment or cleanup plans. Though the homeowner must pay for VIC Program staff time to review plans, they can be provided with assurance any cleanup that is needed meets MPCA guidelines. Homeowners and subsequent purchasers can also receive liability protection, dependent on the cleanup plan and future property use. Find more information about the VIC Program in MPCA fact sheet #c-brwnfld4-01, at: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/c-brwnfld4-01.pdf>.

Homeowners may also be eligible for compensation from Minnesota's Harmful Substance Compensation Program (HSCP) if they incur an actual loss in sale of the property due to property contamination. However, the HSCP cannot reimburse for cleanup or remediation costs, or for predicted losses in your home's value if you do not sell it. Find more information about the HSCP in MPCA fact sheet #c-s1-01, at: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/sites/default/files/c-s1-01.pdf>.

More information

Guidance and requirements in this fact sheet were compiled from Minnesota Statutes, Chapters 115 & 115B. Visit the Office of the Revisor of Statutes at <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs> to review applicable Minnesota Statutes and Rules.

For more information, contact your metropolitan county hazardous waste office or your nearest MPCA regional hazardous waste staff. Notify the Minnesota Duty Officer immediately of any discovery of unknown or hazardous waste on your property or worksite.

Metro County Hazardous Waste Offices

Anoka	763-324-4260
.....	https://www.anokacounty.us/
Carver	952-361-1800
.....	http://www.co.carver.mn.us/
Dakota	952-891-7557
.....	https://www.co.dakota.mn.us/
Hennepin	612-348-3777
.....	http://www.hennepin.us/
Ramsey	651-266-1199
.....	https://www.ramseycounty.us/
Scott	952-496-8177
.....	http://www.scottcountymn.gov/
Washington	651-430-6655
.....	https://www.co.washington.mn.us/

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

Toll free (all offices)	1-800-657-3864
All offices	651-296-6300
.....	https://www.pca.state.mn.us/

Minnesota Duty Officer

Toll free	1-800-422-0798
Metro	651-649-5451

Minnesota Department of Health

Toll free	1-888-345-0823
Metro	651-201-5000
.....	http://www.health.state.mn.us/

Minnesota Occupational Safety & Health Administration (MNOSHA)

Toll free	1-800-342-5354
Metro	612-284-5005
.....	http://www.dli.mn.gov/mnosha.asp