



## Fact Sheet

# Soil Sampling in Residential Yards Continues Near J.H. Baxter & Co. Wood Treatment Facility in Eugene

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality is partnering with the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency to collect more soil samples in residential yards farther away from the J. H. Baxter & Co. wood treatment facility in Eugene. This sampling occurred in March 2023. DEQ also conducted some deeper soil sampling at seven properties already identified for cleanup in April 2023.

## What's happening

DEQ and its contractors were in the neighborhood in early April 2023, collecting samples from seven yards in preparation for the cleanup of contaminated soil. Contractors drilled down to 3 feet to collect samples using a portable drilling rig. This sampling will tell DEQ how much contaminated soil needs to be removed and replaced. An arborist also consulted with the residents who wanted to discuss preservation or removal of their trees. Over the past two years, DEQ and EPA have overseen soil sampling at 64 yards near J.H. Baxter.

So far, seven homes have been identified with soil containing dioxin/furan concentrations above 40 parts per trillion (ppt), the level that DEQ and the Oregon Health Authority have prioritized for cleanup as soon as possible. Dioxin/furan concentrations above 40 ppt is the level at which children under 6 years of age may have an increased risk of reproductive effects in adulthood, if exposed to the contaminated soil every day for a year or longer. The cleanups are expected to take place in summer 2023.

The EPA is also helping DEQ with sampling to determine the extent of the contamination in the neighborhood. In March 2023 samples were collected by EPA from 30 additional yards in the neighborhood to determine how far away from the facility the off-site contamination is located and if any additional yards may need to be cleaned up.

## Background

The 31-acre site at 85 Baxter Street was an active wood treatment facility from the early 1940s until 2022. Historical spills and operational practices have resulted in soil and groundwater contamination. The facility has also had issues with air emissions and concerns from residents about odors and possible related health effects. J.H. Baxter “mothballed” the facility, as described by the company, on Jan. 31, 2022, but environmental regulation continues by DEQ and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency. Along with overseeing the ongoing neighborhood cleanup, DEQ regulates stormwater, groundwater, process water and hazardous waste at J.H.

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Baxter. LRAPA oversees the company's air quality permit. EPA is currently evaluating the facility to determine how and if it can help remove hazardous materials currently leftover from the former plant operations. Over the years, DEQ and LRAPA have investigated the facility and issued numerous enforcement actions and required cleanup measures. In October 2019, DEQ issued a cleanup plan, called a Record of Decision, which required offsite sampling along with other cleanup actions on the J.H. Baxter property. Initial sampling of yards at eight homes near the site took place in fall 2021 and detected dioxin/furan contamination requiring cleanup as soon as possible in all but one of the yards. Additional sampling was needed further away from the site to see if more properties were affected. The Record of Decision also required J.H. Baxter to complete on-site remedial actions, which it has indicated it cannot complete.

## Next steps

As soon as the results from the yard-specific sampling are available, DEQ will make plans to get the seven yards cleaned up. We will work with residents and homeowners to make the cleanup as convenient as possible. DEQ also plans to have a general public meeting to share the results and next steps. The samples typically take six to eight weeks to analyze.

## What are Dioxins?

Dioxins are a group of chemicals that are formed during industrial processes and are present in some wood treatment formulations. Dioxins can also be generated during the burning of organic materials, including wildfires. Studies have shown that exposure to dioxins increases the risk of several types of cancer. More information about dioxins and related health effects can be found at the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease's [ToxFAQ](#) for chlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins (CDDs).

## Where can I get more information?

Visit DEQ's [J.H. Baxter web page](#) for additional information. You can also contact DEQ's Cleanup Project Manager, Susan Turnblom, by phone at 541-687-7464 or email at [susan.turnblom@deq.oregon.gov](mailto:susan.turnblom@deq.oregon.gov).

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