IOWA | Health and Human Services

Planned Lead Azide Detonation

Frequently Asked Questions: Lead Exposure and Blood Lead Testing

The U.S. Army is planning a controlled detonation of degraded lead azide at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown, Iowa, on Wednesday, November 25, 2026, at approximately 9:00 a.m.

Iowa HHS is working with state, local and federal partners to evaluate potential public health impacts, monitor environmental conditions and provide recommendations to help Iowans reduce their risk of lead exposure.

This guidance will be updated as additional information becomes available.

Understanding Lead Exposure

1. **What is lead azide, and why is it a public health concern?**

   Lead azide is a lead-containing explosive material. The planned detonation may release small particles containing lead into the air that could travel beyond the installation and settle on surrounding surfaces.

   The primary anticipated public health concern for surrounding communities is potential exposure to lead.

2. **How could I be exposed to lead from the detonation? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance.**
3. **Who is most vulnerable to the health effects of lead? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
4. **Is a one-time exposure to lead dangerous? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
5. **If I live within the projected plume area, does that mean I have been exposed to lead? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**

Blood Lead Testing Recommendations

6. **Is Iowa HHS recommending that everyone in the projected plume area get tested for lead? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
7. **Who should consider getting a blood lead test? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
8. **Should I get a blood lead test before the detonation? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
9. **How soon after the detonation should I get tested? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
10. **Should I go to an emergency department to get tested for lead? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
11. **Should my child still receive routine childhood lead testing? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**

12. What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Lead can pass to a developing baby during pregnancy and may also pass through breast milk.

Pregnant or breastfeeding women who believe they may have been exposed to lead should contact their healthcare provider to discuss whether testing is appropriate.

Breastfeeding women should not stop breastfeeding solely because they live within the projected plume area. Decisions about breastfeeding should be made with a healthcare provider based on individual exposure circumstances and blood lead test results.

Understanding Blood Lead Test Results

13. What is a blood lead test?

A blood lead test measures the amount of lead in a person's blood. It is the standard medical test used to evaluate lead exposure.

Blood samples may be collected through:

- A finger or heel prick, known as a capillary blood test.
- A blood draw from a vein, known as a venous blood test.

Venous blood testing is more reliable for confirming elevated blood lead levels. Lead dust on the skin can sometimes affect the accuracy of a finger-prick test.

14. What is considered an elevated blood lead level?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) uses a blood lead reference value of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (µg/dL) to identify children with blood lead levels higher than those of most children in the United States.

Children with results at or above this level may need additional testing, an assessment of potential lead exposure sources and other follow-up services.

A result below 3.5 µg/dL does not mean that lead exposure is safe.

Recommendations for adults, including pregnant individuals, may differ. Your healthcare provider can help interpret your results.

15. If my blood lead level is elevated, does that mean it came from the detonation?

Not necessarily. A blood lead test cannot determine the exact source of lead exposure.

Lead exposure can occur from many sources, including:

- Lead-based paint in homes built before 1978.
- Previously contaminated soil.
- Drinking water containing lead.
- Certain occupations and hobbies.

- Some imported products, spices, cosmetics and traditional remedies.

Healthcare providers and public health officials may review your exposure history, previous blood lead test results and environmental monitoring information to help identify possible sources of exposure.

16. If my blood lead test is not elevated, does that mean I was not exposed?

Not necessarily. A low blood lead result is reassuring but does not rule out all previous or future exposure.

Blood lead levels may change over time. The timing of testing, amount of exposure and whether exposure is continuing can affect test results.

Your healthcare provider may recommend repeat testing if there are concerns about ongoing exposure or if your initial test was performed very soon after a potential exposure.

17. What happens if my blood lead level is elevated?

Your healthcare provider may recommend:

- Additional or confirmatory blood lead testing.
- Identifying and reducing possible sources of lead exposure.
- Follow-up blood lead testing.
- Additional medical evaluation, if necessary.

Most individuals with mildly elevated blood lead levels do not require hospitalization or specialized medication.

The most important step in managing lead exposure is preventing additional exposure.

18. Will my blood lead test results be reported to Iowa HHS?

Yes. Iowa requires all blood lead test results to be reported to Iowa HHS, regardless of a person's age or test result.

This information helps public health officials monitor lead exposure, identify trends and provide appropriate follow-up services.

Individual test results are protected in accordance with applicable confidentiality requirements.

Environmental Monitoring and Testing Recommendations

19. Will environmental monitoring results be used to determine who should be tested? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance

20. If lead is detected in soil near my home, should I get tested?

The presence of lead in soil does not necessarily mean that you or your family have been exposed.

Lead occurs naturally in the environment and may also be present from historical human activities.

The potential health risk depends on several factors, including the concentration of lead, where it is located, whether individuals have contact with the soil and the frequency and duration of that contact.

If environmental monitoring identifies elevated lead concentrations in areas where people may have been exposed, Iowa HHS may recommend targeted blood lead testing, particularly for young children and pregnant individuals.

There is no single soil lead concentration that automatically determines whether an individual needs a blood lead test.

21. **What if environmental monitoring does not identify elevated lead concentrations following the detonation? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
22. **What if environmental monitoring identifies elevated lead concentrations in my community? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
23. **Should I have the soil at my home independently tested for lead?**

Individuals concerned about lead contamination on their property may choose to have environmental testing performed.

However, Iowa HHS encourages residents to review available environmental monitoring results and public health recommendations before arranging event-specific testing.

If you choose to have your property tested, use a qualified environmental professional or laboratory. The location and method of sample collection are important to accurately interpreting results.

Protecting Yourself and Your Family

24. **What can I do to reduce my risk of lead exposure during the detonation? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
25. **What can I do after the airborne plume has passed? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
26. **What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?**

Many individuals with elevated blood lead levels do not have noticeable symptoms.

When symptoms occur, they may include:

- Abdominal pain.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Constipation.
- Headaches.
- Fatigue or weakness.

- Irritability.

These symptoms can also occur with many other medical conditions.

Contact your healthcare provider or the Iowa Poison Control Center if you have concerns about potential lead exposure. Individuals experiencing severe symptoms, including confusion, unusual drowsiness, seizures or difficulty breathing, should seek immediate medical attention. Call 911 for a medical emergency.

Accessing Testing and Additional Information

27. Where can I or my child receive a blood lead test?

Blood lead testing may be available through:

- Primary care providers.
- Pediatricians.
- Community health centers.
- Some local public health agencies.
- Clinical laboratories, with a healthcare provider's order when required.

Contact your healthcare provider or local public health agency to identify testing options in your community. To contact your local Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:

Lee County Health Department (Lee County residents)

5001 Avenue O

Fort Madison, Iowa 52627

Phone: 319-372-5225

Des Moines County Health Department (Des Moines and Van Buren County residents)

505 Curran Street

Burlington, IA 52601

Phone: 319-753-8290

If additional event-specific testing resources are established, Iowa HHS will communicate that information to affected communities.

28. Will blood lead testing be free?

Coverage for blood lead testing depends on your health insurance plan, eligibility and the reason for testing.

Routine childhood lead testing is covered for children enrolled in Medicaid.

Iowa HHS will provide additional information if event-specific testing resources or financial assistance become available.

29. **Who can I contact if I have questions about potential lead exposure? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**
30. **Where can I find updated information? Please Refer to the Lead Azide Guidance**