

# What you should know about the Valley School Air Sampling Investigation



Valley School District in Stevens County, Washington is located directly across the street from Lane Mountain Company, the largest producer of silica sand in the Northwest. The Washington State Department of Health and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) are working on an air sampling program (also known as an environmental exposure investigation or EI) in Valley, Washington. We are taking air samples at the school and a few nearby locations to learn if silica dust from Lane Mountain Company could impact the health of students and staff at Valley School District.



*Valley School District is concerned about silica dust from Lane Mountain Company, located across the street.*

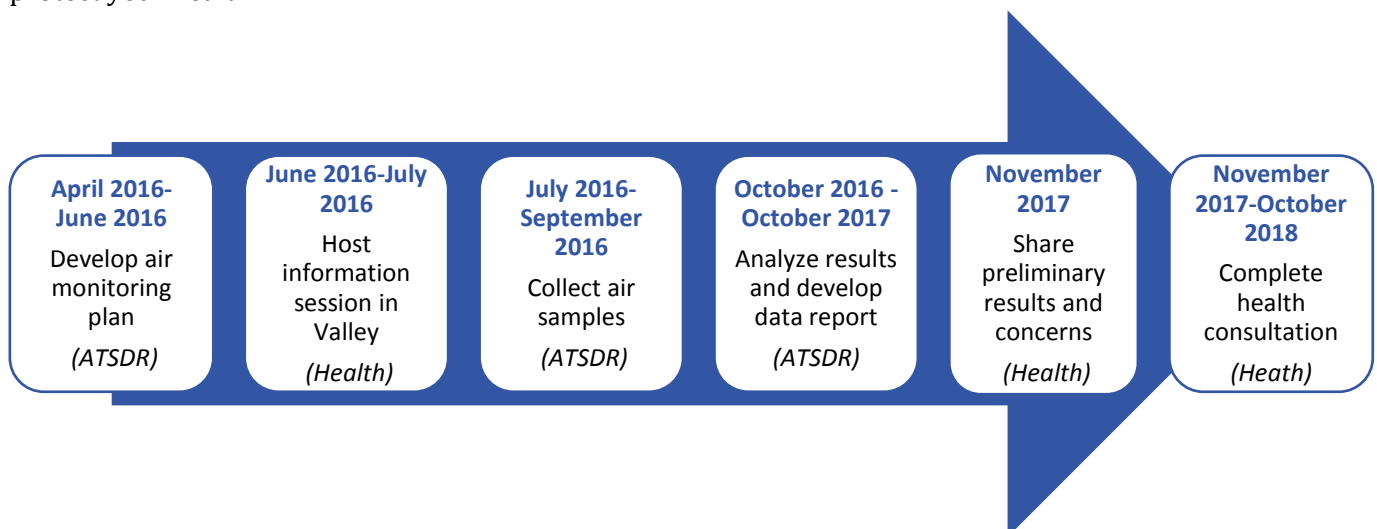
## Exposure investigation

ATSDR is leading an environmental exposure investigation (or EI) in Valley, Washington. An EI includes collecting air samples to help us understand if you could be exposed to a contaminant- like silica dust- in places where you live, spend time, or play.

The purpose of doing an EI in Valley is to get more information about the type and level of silica dust in the air. We want to know if silica dust in the air at and near Valley School District is small enough to enter your lungs and could be harmful to your health. Sampling provides a “snapshot” that helps us understand the current level of contaminants in the air. However, it cannot tell us how the level of contaminants may change over time or under different weather conditions.

## Anticipated timeline

ATSDR will conduct air sampling at Valley School District between July and September 2016. They will collect air samples from the school and nearby locations for six to eight weeks. After ATSDR analyzes the results and develops a report, we will make recommendations about the best way to protect your health and the health of your community. These recommendations may include things you can do. We may also suggest actions that Valley School District, Lane Mountain Company, or other local and state agencies can take to protect your health.



## Silica dust and your health

Crystalline silica may be a concern to your health if it is released into the air in small particles. Breathing air with silica dust may or may not impact your health. The level of silica dust in the air is not the only factor that will determine whether or not you will become sick. How silica dust may impact your health depends on:

- Whether the dust particles are small enough to enter your lungs
- Level of the silica dust in the air
- How much and how long you breathe in silica dust
- Whether you have any pre-existing health conditions, like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Silica dust can irritate your eyes, nose, and throat. If the particles of dust are small enough to enter your lungs and you breathe in enough silica dust over time, breathing silica dust may worsen pre-existing health conditions like asthma or damage the tissue of your lungs. If you are exposed to high levels of silica dust over long periods of time, it can cause silicosis, a lung disease that causes scarring of the lungs and makes it difficult to breathe.

## About health consultations

The Washington State Department of Health completes health consultations under a cooperative agreement with ATSDR. ATSDR is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the federal public health agency responsible for health issues related to hazardous waste sites.

Health consultations are completed when community members or agencies have concerns about chemicals in their environment. We look at environmental and health data to determine whether contact with chemicals in the environment is harmful to your health. We make suggestions about how to protect your health based on this information.

## How can I learn more?

For up-to-date information about the air sampling investigation at Valley School District:

Visit [www.doh.wa.gov/valleyschool](http://www.doh.wa.gov/valleyschool)

Or call Washington State Department of Health at 1-877-485-7316

## References

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). (No date). "Air sampling and modeling: Measuring and estimating levels of air pollution." Available at:  
[http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/vieques/docs/Air\\_Sampling%26Modeling\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/sites/vieques/docs/Air_Sampling%26Modeling_Booklet.pdf).

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<http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/silicosis/>.

Minnesota Department of Health. (2014). "Silica Sand Mining and Health." Available at:  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/hazardous/topics/silica/ssmhealth.pdf>.

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DOH 334-398 May 2016. For people with disabilities, this document is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 1-800-525-0127 (TDD/TTY call 711).