

Bay Street Allotments: Advice to allotment holders July 2010

Keeping you informed and up to date

Introduction

This leaflet has been produced to provide guidance to the Bay Street Allotments holders on the investigation that has been carried out at the site.

The investigation was undertaken because until the 1970s there was a waste disposal incinerator to the south of the allotments, next to the current waste transfer station, and the former incinerator's operations may have affected the soils on and around the site.

Soil samples were taken and analysed to assess if contaminants were present and if so at what level. A number of compounds normally associated with incinerators were found.

Latest News

The investigation found that soil on the allotments contains ash, clinker, coal, and other materials, such as, glass, metal, pottery and plastics. It is likely the ash and clinker came from the incinerator.

Some contamination was found in the ash and clinker including dioxins, furans and PCBs from the burning of domestic waste, benzo(a)pyrene, another burning product, and lead.

Is my family at risk?

The identified contaminants could pose a risk to human health if long term contact with soil or produce from the site occurs. However these risks can be reduced by taking some sensible precautions, until solutions to remove the risk can be found and implemented.

These precautions are aimed at reducing contact with the soil as much as possible. Previous advice provided to allotment occupiers is still appropriate;

- Any excess soil should be removed before leaving the allotment
- Outer clothes, gloves and shoes etc should be removed before entering your house.
- Hands should be washed before eating, drinking or smoking on the allotments.
- Any tools that are taken off the allotment should be rinsed in clean water.

Local allotment holders will not be expected to meet the costs of any subsequent clean up of the site.

I keep chickens – can I eat the eggs?

Dioxins, furans and PCB's in the soil can accumulate in chickens and then build up in the eggs. A limited number of egg samples have been taken. We have consulted experts from the Food Standards Agency about the results and in view of the limited information available they have provided the following precautionary advice to be followed at this stage:

- Children under the age of 14 should not consume eggs from the allotments, unless specific advice for your plot has been given.
- Adults should consume no more than 1 duck egg or 2 hen eggs per week from these allotments, unless specific advice for your plot has been given.
- No eggs should be sold from these allotments.

I grow vegetables – can we eat them?

Plants take up very little contamination from the soil. Most contamination is found in the outer peel of root vegetables (often as fine soil in wrinkles on the peel), or may be found after rain has splashed soil on leaves.

The risks can be reduced by;

- Peeling root vegetables and
- Washing thoroughly leaf vegetables such as cabbage before eating or cooking them.

Food grown in containers of clean compost or soil from off site may be treated as uncontaminated although we would recommend washing all produce before consumption.

My children/grandchildren play on site – what should I do?

The assessment of the contamination is focused on children, because they are more sensitive to contamination. The risks can be reduced by;

- Contact with bare soil should be prevented where possible.
- Children's clothes and footwear should be removed after use and washed after they have played on the site
- Hands should be thoroughly washed before eating
- Nail biting should be discouraged.
- We recommend that children do not eat on the allotment site.





Should I leave my allotment?

By following the above advice you can minimise the risk to yourself and your family.

What happens next?

Rochdale MBC is in discussion with other agencies to identify what may be done to deal with the problem.

Staff will be available to answer any questions you may have.

If you have any further questions or concerns:

Contact

Michael Moore, Senior Contaminated Land Officer

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E: peel.lane@rochdale.gov.uk

W: www.rochdale.gov.uk/pollution

If you would like this leaflet in any other language or format, please call us on (01706) 925685.

