

Grenfell environmental checks stage 2 findings: summary and Q&A from 8 July online meeting

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The second part of the two-stage programme of environmental checks has been completed. At an online information meeting for the community on 8 July 2021, we updated attendees on the outcome of the stage 2 checks. We have summarised below the questions we received.

- Read the full report from stage 2 of the environmental checks [here](#)
- See a map of the sampling areas and a summary of the stage 2 checks
- Watch a [video of the online meeting here](#)

Key findings

- There is no evidence of harmful soil contamination linked to the Grenfell Tower fire.
- At two of the 39 sites tested (Treadgold House on the Lancaster West Estate, and Avondale Park Gardens near Grenfell Tower) there are differences in levels of lead found in the soil but there is no immediate risk to residents' health. The risk thresholds for lead are very strict and are based on repeated exposure over time.
- Further investigation has been recommended to provide greater certainty about the average concentrations of lead at these sites, and any potential impact on health.

About the stage 2 checks

The stage 2 checks investigated whether any potential soil contamination was caused by chemicals likely to have been released from the fire, and if there are any risks to health. The checks looked at soil and locally-grown food samples.

In stage 2, 440 samples were taken:

- from 39 areas
- from sites 500 metres around Grenfell Tower
- from sites up to 4km away in the north westerly direction of the smoke plume from the fire

All the samples were tested for lead, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and asbestos. Fire-related chemicals such as dioxins and furans were also tested in some samples. The [stage 1 checks](#) identified these chemicals as having a 'potential contaminant linkage'. This is the link between the chemicals found in soil, how people could come into contact with them, and who and what may be affected.

The meeting panel

During the meeting, which was introduced by Myles Gardiner, a civil servant at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), attendees heard from, and were able to ask questions of our panel:

- Professor Alan Penn, chief scientific adviser, MHCLG
- Professor Gideon Henderson, chief scientific adviser, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- David Dyson, project manager at independent environmental specialist contractor, AECOM
- Dr Paul Nathanail, suitably qualified person
- Robin Kamanyire, head of environmental hazards, Public Health England
- Sue Harris, director of environment and communities, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Background

In October 2018, the government announced that additional environmental checks would be carried out around the Grenfell Tower site to investigate the potential risk of soil contamination as a result of the fire. This was to reassure residents that any environmental risks to public health would be fully assessed, and appropriate action taken if needed.

The environmental checks were carried out in two stages. A multi-agency partnership (MAP) oversaw the works, and scientific advice and scrutiny on the environmental checks was provided by a group of independent scientific experts.

The first stage of the environmental checks was carried out by AECOM, in 2019. They gathered background information, such as where residents found debris from the fire, and the direction of the smoke plume.

In the stage 1 checks, 92 samples were analysed from 21 locations. AECOM then looked for potential contaminant linkages using these samples.

The levels of chemicals that AECOM found were typical of those generally found in London and showed no increased risk to health from the fire. Find out more about the stage 1 checks [here](#).

The findings from stage 1 informed the scope and design of the stage 2 checks.

Air quality monitoring

Air quality monitoring has been in place around Grenfell Tower since June 2017. The air is monitored continuously and the data is analysed at least once a day. Like many parts of London, air quality can be affected by pollution, such as from heavy traffic and gas-fired boilers. However, we have not identified any causes for concern. You can find out more about the air quality in the area surrounding Grenfell Tower, including a weekly report, [here](#).

Questions and answers

Thank you to everyone who submitted questions to the panel. This is a summary of the questions and answers.

Q: Can you say more about the contamination identified at Treadgold House and Avondale Park Gardens, including any implications for the health of the local communities there?

A: There were 12 samples taken from Treadgold House with levels of lead that varied between different locations.

At Avondale Park Gardens, two samples were taken from the communal space. One showed levels of lead that were similar to the other areas tested, and one showed higher levels.

The next step is to take more samples, which will give us greater certainty of the average concentrations there and inform a health risk-assessment.

The risk thresholds for lead are very strict, and so a slightly higher level does not present an immediate threat. With lead contamination, the risk thresholds are based on the prospect of repeated exposure over some time and a slightly higher level would not present an immediate risk.

Q: What about the contamination at Lancaster Green, which is right next to Treadgold House?

A: The levels of lead in soil sampled at Lancaster Green are much lower than at Treadgold House. Lancaster Green was developed more recently than Treadgold House, and it is not unusual to find different concentrations of lead in the soil in nearby areas developed at different times.

Q: Are you sure that there is no risk to the students at Kensington Aldridge Academy, next door to the Tower?

A: We sampled the soil within the outer Tower cordon, where there are grassed areas that the Academy students walk across.

Based on the results that we have – both from these soil checks, and also the ongoing air quality monitoring around the Tower – the health risk to Kensington Aldridge Academy students is comparable to those attending any other school in London in a similarly built-up area.

Q: What were the lead levels when Avondale Park Gardens and Treadgold House were built?

A: Unfortunately, those redevelopments are too old for the planning records to include that data.

Q: Do you think there is absolutely no risk of contaminants now from the fire?

A: Our checks have shown that there may be very low levels of contaminants that came from the fire, but at such low levels that we would not be able to distinguish them from those normally found in an urban environment. We have assessed that the risk to health is negligible.

Q: Is the risk from lead greater for children?

A: Yes. Children are more susceptible to the risks from lead. The risk assessments are based on the risk for a young child so are already sensitive to the effect on children.

Q: Is safe to eat fruit and vegetables grown in the area?

A: Samples were taken from fruit trees, vegetable beds and plots, and analysed at accredited laboratories. The results show that there is no significant risk to health from growing and consuming fruit and vegetables in the area. The advice on growing fruit and vegetables has been reviewed by the [Food Standards Agency](#), and has not changed from stage 1 of the investigation. The advice is to wash your hands after gardening, working or playing in soil, and washing (and peeling where appropriate) home-grown fruit and vegetables.

Health and wellbeing

You do not need to take any action as a result of these findings. However, if you are worried about your health, the local NHS service offers physical and mental health support to members of the community affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy, including children and young people. Visit grenfellwellbeing.com for information.

A community respiratory service from Imperial College, London, offers checks to bereaved families, survivors, and the local community to understand more about lung function. It is available through the NHS dedicated service or your GP.

If you're feeling anxious or stressed, support is available from the Grenfell Health and Wellbeing Service. Contact the urgent advice line on **0800 0234 650** or visit [grenfellwellbeing.com](https://www.grenfellwellbeing.com) for information.

Next steps

Further investigations at Treadgold House and Avondale Park Gardens will be carried out by independent environmental specialist contractor, AECOM. These are currently planned to start in September. The council is writing to residents with a further update in August.

How to get in touch

- **To contact the environmental checks team:**
email environmentalchecks@communities.gov.uk or phone **0303 444 9086**

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (July 2021)