IOWA | Health and Human Services

Guidance for Schools and Child Care Facilities

Planned Lead Azide Detonation Fact Sheet — November 20, 2026

Situation Overview

The U.S. Army is planning two controlled detonations of degraded lead azide at the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown, Iowa, on Friday, November 20, 2026, at approximately noon.

The detonation is expected to produce a dust plume containing lead particles that may travel beyond the installation and settle on surrounding surfaces. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued an emergency permit authorizing the operation. Iowa HHS was recently made aware of the planned detonation and is coordinating with other state agencies and federal partners to assess potential public health concerns and support local communities.

Potential Public Health Concerns

The primary potential exposure pathways include:

- **Airborne exposure:** Breathing in lead-containing particles following the detonation.
- **Surface exposure:** Contact with or ingestion of lead dust deposited on soil, playgrounds, vehicles, buildings, and other surfaces.

Lead is a toxic metal that can cause serious health effects. No safe level of lead exposure has been identified. Young children and pregnant women are at particular risk.

Monitoring and Potentially Affected Areas

The U.S. Army has released two maps identifying areas of potential airborne lead exposure and lead dust deposition. These are modeled projections, not confirmed measurements, and may change based on weather conditions.

The Army has indicated it will update its maps:

- Six hours before the detonation and hourly thereafter until detonation.
- Following the event, with a final estimate of the impacted area.

The Army will also communicate when the airborne exposure period has ended. Residents should follow the latest official instructions.

Current maps and updates: U.S. Army Installation Community Notifications

Recommended Precautions for Schools and Child Care Facilities

1. Outdoor Activities

- Consider keeping children indoors during the potential exposure period.
- Reschedule recess, outdoor physical education, playground activities, field trips, and other nonessential outdoor activities.
- Avoid outdoor activities in areas identified on the Army's maps until the airborne exposure period has ended and any surface contamination concerns have been addressed.
- Child care providers should take additional precautions to limit outdoor exposure for infants, toddlers, and young children.

2. Building Ventilation and Indoor Safety

- Keep exterior windows and doors closed during the potential exposure period.
- Turn off or place heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in recirculation mode, minimize outdoor air intake, and maximize indoor air filtration during the potential exposure period.
- Minimize unnecessary entry and exit while the plume may be passing through the community.

3. Transportation and School Operations

- Avoid unnecessary travel through potentially affected areas during the exposure period.
- Consider rescheduling field trips, outdoor events, and nonessential transportation.
- School buses and other vehicles traveling through affected areas should keep windows closed and use air recirculation when appropriate.
- Administrators should review transportation, dismissal, and parent pickup plans in case the exposure period overlaps with normal school operations.
- Schools and child care providers should coordinate with local emergency management and public health officials regarding any necessary adjustments to operations.

4. Cleaning Playgrounds and Outdoor Surfaces

Following the detonation, lead-containing dust may settle on outdoor surfaces within affected areas.

- After the U.S. Army determines the airborne exposure period has ended, assess the need to clean potentially exposed surfaces.
- Wet-clean frequently touched surfaces, including playground equipment, outdoor toys, tables, chairs, handrails, and exterior windowsills.
- Avoid dry sweeping, leaf blowing, or other activities that may redistribute dust.
- Wash children's hands with soap and water after potential contact with outdoor dust and before eating or drinking.
- Keep children away from suspected contaminated surfaces and outdoor play areas until appropriate cleaning or assessment has occurred.
- Consult local public health or environmental officials if significant dust deposition is suspected or additional cleanup guidance is needed.

5. Communication With Families and Staff

- Inform parents, guardians, and staff about planned precautions and any changes to outdoor activities or transportation.
- Encourage families to monitor official information from the U.S. Army and local emergency management.
- Parents concerned about possible lead exposure should consult their child's healthcare provider or local public health agency regarding whether blood lead testing is appropriate.
- Follow any additional protective actions or evacuation instructions issued by emergency management authorities.

Monitoring and Updates

Schools and child care providers should review the U.S. Army's updated plume maps before making operational decisions on November 20. Plume maps are embedded in the current public advisory document at https://www.army.mil/asc#org-iowa-army-ammunition-plant.

The Army plans to provide updated modeling approximately six hours before the detonation and hourly thereafter until the event. A final estimate of affected areas will be provided following the detonation.

Official U.S. Army updates:

https://www.army.mil/asc#org-iowa-army-ammunition-plant

Additional lead exposure prevention information:

- EPA: https://www.epa.gov/lead/actions-reduce-potential-lead-exposure
- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/testing/

Additional Information and Resources

U.S. Army — Detonation Information, Maps, and Updates
ASC Installation Community Notifications

U.S. Army — Frequently Asked Questions
Lead Azide Detonation FAQ

Iowa HHS — Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Lead Exposure, Prevention, and Testing

Iowa HHS — Environmental Health Reporting
Reportable Environmental and Occupational Conditions

Media Inquiries:
Justine Barati, Public Affairs Specialist
U.S. Army Sustainment Command
Justine.A.Barati.civ@army.mil

Important: Information regarding the detonation, potential exposure areas, and recommended precautions may change. Local public health agencies should refer to the most current U.S. Army notifications and Iowa HHS guidance when communicating with residents and community partners.