



For Immediate Release
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Important Information for Residents Returning Home Following ChemTool Evacuation

Air, Water, Soil, Surface Testing Progress Available online

SPRINGFIELD – The Winnebago County Health Department and the State of Illinois would like to remind residents in the Rockton area recently evacuated by the Chemtool, Incorporated chemical fire to use extra precautions when returning home.

After a fire there are several things that residents must consider.

Residents should document the condition of their property by taking photos. These photos will be critical for insurance claims and any potential damage assessment done by the local authorities. State and local officials expect to begin on-site property damage assessments on Tuesday, June 22nd, weather depending.

“Residents impacted by the fire are encouraged to report damage to their local emergency management officials,” **said Illinois Emergency Management Agency Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau.** “Share the photos of your home’s damage with local authorities and keep a copy of all receipts. This information can be used by local authorities should they seek federal assistance for the affected community. These are also invaluable tips to help with insurance claims following this tragic event.”

Residents should also throw away any food or water that may have been exposed to smoke soot or other harmful particles. For example, if an apple was sitting out on the counter, or if water was left in your pet’s water bowl, please discard it. Simply put, when in doubt throw it out.

“The test results indicating that residents can return safely to their home and resume some sense of normal life is welcome news.,” **said Dr. Sandra Martell, Winnebago County Health Department Administrator.** “Residents should take the recommended precautions and follow the guidance to return to their homes and begin the recovery process as their environment has still been impacted by this fire.”

When cleaning your home to remove debris or dust that may have collected in your home make sure that you are wearing protective clothing. This includes long sleeve shirts, pants, gloves and a mask to protect you from inhaling dangerous particles. To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, use a mild soap or detergent with warm water and dry thoroughly.

As for debris outside the home, the Winnebago County Health Department recommends residents do not pick up any ash or debris from the fire with their bare hands. Residents who may have been impacted by the Chemtool fire can call 877-552-8942 to arrange for a contractor, Clean Harbors, to come out and remove fire-related debris from residential homes and businesses in the area.

Water quality is also a significant concern following any kind of disaster. Extensive efforts have been made to protect the Rock River near the site of the fire. While the Rock River does not serve as a drinking water source for Rockton and surrounding communities, the Illinois EPA is conducting ongoing water testing from the river. Current data indicates there are no adverse effects on the river. Illinois EPA is conducting additional testing of the community water supply to ensure there was no contamination from the fire. Information on sampling efforts will be shared with the public.

“Illinois EPA will continue to provide all necessary resources to respond to this devastating incident and we will ensure the public is provided with all available information,” **said Illinois EPA Director John Kim.** “Our focus remains the health and safety of residents and the protection of our environment. Illinois EPA will continue to have a long-term presence at the site in the form of oversight regarding site investigation and proper cleanup of contamination.”

Illinois EPA continues to work with U.S. EPA, the Illinois National Guard, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and the Winnebago County Department of Public Health to review air monitoring data that has been collected. Current data indicates no violations of national ambient air quality standards and there is no concern for air quality at the ground level. Additional monitoring continues and will be evaluated to obtain a full picture of air quality conditions.

To provide an additional layer of transparency throughout this process, the [U.S. EPA](#) and the [Illinois EPA](#) have established incident webpages for information related to the Chemtool fire response. These pages will include any relevant news releases, statements, available monitoring data and links to other resources. Additional testing information will be made available on the [Winnebago County Health Department](#) webpage.

Any resident who has questions about the response and recovery operations associated with a Chemtool fire can sign-up to receive official Chemtool Alerts from the Rockton Police at www.rocktonpolice.org and by clicking “Click here for Chemtool Fire Information” or by contacting 815-972-7300 or RocktonChemFire@wchd.org.

The Winnebago County Health Department has established a hotline and email address to answer questions from the public. That number is 815-972-7300 and the email address is RoctonChemFire@wchd.org. You can also refer to the department's list of frequently asked questions at www.wchd.org.

The Lubrizol Corporation, parent company to Chemtool, has a claim form for reimbursement for personal expenses tied to the evacuation, such as and hotel expenses. [Click here for the claim form](#). Residents have until October 31, 2021 to submit claims related to the Chemtool fire.

Additional cleaning recommendations include:

Swimming Pools – To clean swimming pools, remove debris, skim debris, recirculate through the filters, and conduct routine pool maintenance (pH levels).

Gardens – Individuals should remove visible large particle debris from garden beds using gloves or shovels and isolate the garbage in a separate container. Produce from the garden can be safely consumed after thoroughly washing and rinsing. Leafy vegetables can be soaked in a 10% vinegar solution to lift soil particles from produce.

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/SoCo/files/337032.pdf>

Air Conditioners – Air-conditioners can be used to maintain temperature and indoor air quality. Clean or replace your air conditioner filter to ensure that it is working efficiently and effectively. Turn on your system's "fan" or "recirculate" option to circulate the air in your home through the filter. If you have a window air conditioner, close the outdoor air damper.

<https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/wildfires-and-indoor-air-quality-iaq>

https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/covid-19/wildfire_smoke_covid-19.html

Outdoor Activities – Do not let children play in or with items covered by the ash or debris. While outside playing or working in the yard, avoid hand to mouth contact and wash hands upon returning indoors. Pets can go outdoors, but don't let them near ash or debris. Take off your shoes so that you do not track particles into your home. Those with respiratory conditions such as asthma may need to take extra precautions as exposure to ash in the air may trigger breathing issues.

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