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## *Media Statement*

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### **Esperance lead issue update**

Further soil testing in Esperance, at sites including schools and park playgrounds, has detected lead levels well below health and environmental trigger levels.

Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) officers collected 35 soil samples from 19 sites during April covering parks, kindergartens, primary schools, high schools, vacant lots in residential areas and one industrial area adjacent to the port.

DEC Environmental Regulation Director Robert Atkins said the highest lead reading recorded of 380 milligrams per kilogram (mg/kg) came from bare soil beside the 'quarantine station' next to the port and railway line. The trigger level for further investigation for such a site under the commercial/industrial health standard is 1500 mg/kg for lead.

"The trigger levels for residential areas and parks and schools are naturally much lower, 300 and 600 mg/kg respectively, and the highest reading recorded at these sites was 88 mg/kg and the majority were less than 10 mg/kg," Mr Atkins said.

"Nickel levels were also low, with the exception of three areas within 200 metres of the entrance to the Esperance port. The environmental trigger level is 60 mg/kg for nickel, and again the majority of samples recorded were less than 10 mg/kg.

"Further sampling of soils across Esperance may be required as part of the human and ecological risk assessment of the town that DEC is commissioning jointly with the Department of Health.

"An independent environmental specialist will be contracted shortly to assess the risk to the community or the environment associated with emissions from materials transported through the town for shipment from the port, and to recommend any further clean up measures that may be required.

"The risk assessment will be carried out in consultation with the community."

The testing in April confirms the interim results from hand held meters used by DEC to test soil samples in March.

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