



New Jersey Communities Glowing with Success, Not Radiation



*A home during excavation of the yard
to remove contamination*

Glen Ridge

Residents of Glen Ridge, Bloomfield, and East Orange, New Jersey—small suburban towns in the northeastern portion of the state—are breathing sighs of relief since EPA began cleaning up the radiation that has invaded their yards and homes. Probably one of the "scariest" forms of contamination, radiation enters buildings as radon gas and gamma radiation, and can lead to an increased risk of cancer and birth defects, among other maladies. However, EPA's cleanup will permanently reduce the potential for exposure, which has made community members very happy—one resident even wrote his congressman expressing his appreciation for the Agency's efforts.

Glen Ridge Radium Site

Radium-processing facilities operating in the early 1900s likely led to the radiation contamination that permeates certain areas of these towns. In addition to the dumping of radium waste in what was then a rural area, houses were later constructed nearby and even atop the disposal sites, and some of the radium-contaminated soil was used as fill in low-lying areas or mixed with cement to create sidewalks and building foundations. EPA suspected that more than 420 properties in the Glen Ridge project area were potentially contaminated with hazardous concentrations of radium during the past 80 years. Testing revealed that 135 of these properties—or about 30 percent—required cleanup.

EPA Works to Clean Properties

EPA has worked with the community for nearly 20 years to address the radium contamination. First, the Agency installed radon ventilation systems and gamma radiation shielding in several homes; next, the Agency created phased cleanup plans that would initially address the most severely contaminated properties, followed by those with less contamination. EPA designed the plans such that cleanup activities minimized stress on residents and the immediate community. The plans call for removing contaminated soil from yards and in some cases from underneath residences, followed by restoration of the properties. Certain excavation scenarios, such as removing contamination under the basement slab, utility disruptions, or a large yard excavation that blocks access to the house, require the temporary relocation of a family. EPA began cleaning up the homes with the worst contamination levels in 1991, and has conducted successive cleanup phases on additional homes since. The entire cleanup effort is expected to be completed in 2004.

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JUST THE FACTS:

- EPA has invested a total of \$132 million to remove contamination from the site during the past 12 years. More than 100 residential and several municipal properties have been cleaned up to date.
- Cleanup work is now underway at 21 residential properties and is expected to be finished next fall

EPA's cleanup efforts have successfully addressed the concerns expressed by residents, which ranged from potential adverse health effects, to how cleanup would be conducted, to the color of replacement flowering plants, to property values negatively affected by the contamination.

EPA's cleanup work extends beyond the community's residences. The Agency conducted cleanup at the local park, Barrows Field; it was estimated that 100 residents had lived adjacent to this park, where radiological contamination was found more than 15 feet below the ground. EPA removed 75,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil and restored the park for public use. The Agency is also investigating potential contamination at the Glen Ridge project area's borders, and is conducting a study to determine whether the area's groundwater has been affected. Although adverse health effects from groundwater contamination are not a major concern because residents use city water supplies, the potential for radium to seep into the bedrock aquifer and subsequently cause health problems ensures EPA will address any potential contamination issues.

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<http://www.epa.gov/region2/Superfund>

EPA Works with Communities

EPA has involved the Glen Ridge community throughout its contamination investigation and cleanup efforts. The Agency issues project updates every four to six months to keep residents apprised of developments, hosts town meetings, and holds meetings with individual homeowners to address their concerns. EPA's cleanup efforts have successfully addressed the concerns expressed by residents, which ranged from potential adverse health effects, to how cleanup would be conducted, to the color of replacement flowering plants, to property values negatively affected by the contamination. In addition to conducting cleanup, the Agency's efforts have resulted in improved infrastructure, higher property values, and the permanent mitigation of the area's radium contamination. Hundreds of jobs have been created through the cleanup activities, including jobs in landscaping, building and rebuilding, and sidewalk repair.

EPA estimates that cleanup activities for the Glen Ridge project area will continue through 2004. However, the accomplishments to date demonstrate that the Agency is committed to seeing the effort through to the end, to ensure that residents live, work, and play in a community free from radiological contamination.



The same home, after cleanup and restoration.