LA County: Free Lead Tests for People Near Plant

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health plans to offer free blood tests for lead poisoning to hundreds of thousands of residents because of worries over toxic pollution from a battery recycling plant, officials said Thursday.

Exide Technologies, the company that runs the large, decades-old plant in Vernon, will pay for the tests for the largely working class and immigrant residents of southeast Los Angeles in neighborhoods around the plant, county officials told the Los Angeles Times [1].

The tests could begin as soon as next month as residents increasingly express outrage over the emissions from the plant.

"Our responsibility is to protect our constituents," said county Supervisor Gloria Molina, who represents the area of the plant. "Something had to be done."

The suburban plant, which recycles 22 million lead-acid motor vehicle batteries a year, was ordered closed in April by the state after environmental officials found it had high levels of lead and arsenic in its emissions. But in June a judge granted a restraining order allowing resumed operations of the plant for Georgia-based Exide, which said in court filings it did not pose "an imminent and substantial" danger to the public.

Exide did not respond to several requests for comment from the Times, and a phone message left after business hours by The Associated Press was not immediately returned.

Dr. Cyrus Rangan, director of the health department's bureau of toxicology, said the tests will be offered indefinitely to anyone who thinks they are affected but he doesn't expect many cases of high lead levels.

Rangan said the tests are being offered "to provide a measure of reassurance to the public" and his office "is not hearing about people with a lot of symptoms of lead poisoning."

___

Information from: Los Angeles Times, http://www.latimes.com [2]

Source URL (retrieved on *09/18/2014 - 12:24am*):
http://www.chem.info/news/2013/09/la-county-free-lead-tests-people-near-plant?qt-most_popular=1

Links:
[1] http://lat.ms/1bbUeCM
[2] http://www.latimes.com