

Workers uncover stinky, oily soil in Iqaluit

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[CBC News](#)

Soil from the Lower Base subdivision in Iqaluit was being tested for contamination on Wednesday after workers digging to install water and sewer lines encountered fumes and oily puddles.

In the past few days, the smell of fuel has been seeping out of the four-metre-deep hole in the ground, giving construction workers headaches and sore throats.

Travis Foley, one of the workers, said he has no doubt the soil is contaminated.

"It's in the ground, it comes over your clothes, but you wash your clothes and you're okay," he said. "Maybe in 20 years' time we'll feel the effects."

The federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs collected soil samples on Tuesday morning to test for traces of petroleum and heavy metals.

Nunavut's Environment Department took its own samples, but the City of Iqaluit hasn't tested the site yet.

"This is an issue that seems to just have come to surface in the last couple of days," said Brad Sokach, head of the city's engineering department. "At this point, we haven't put a plan in place. We're still evaluating our options."

Sokach added that fuel was found in other parts of the subdivision five years ago. Despite that, the city still has no plan for dealing with contaminated sites.

For now, the workers have been instructed to keep digging, returning the same soil into the ground when the work is completed.

Residents and business owners say they're worried about two things: their health and the value of their property.

"There's a lot of kids on this street, too," said Jamie Guilboard, who owns a business in the neighborhood. "If they're just sucking in these toxins, what future do they have healthwise?"

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Despite finding fuel in the ground five years ago, the city still has no plan for a clean-up plan.

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Safety steps could restart Lower Base project

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CBC News

Workers could soon be back at a construction site in downtown Iqaluit after it was shut down on Friday.

Authorities issued the order because the site posed a health risk to workers and the public. The workers were installing water and sewer lines in the Lower Base subdivision near the Northmart store when they encountered oil patches and toxic fumes. The construction site is empty now, except for some orange barriers and a big hole in the ground.

The city of Iqaluit wanted work to continue at the Lower Base subdivision. But, the Workers' Compensation Board decided to step in. A representative of the board, Dave Grundy, says the contractor, Tower Arctic, must issue protective clothing for the safety of their workers and for everyone else in Iqaluit.

"When workers get out of a pit from contamination, we don't want them walking all over the community, dropping that contamination wherever they go, until we know exactly what we're dealing with here," says Grundy.

Tower Arctic must also set up hygiene stations so workers can rinse off before they leave the site.

In the meantime, the city's head engineer Brad Sokach, sent more crews to dig around Lower Base to determine how big an area is affected.

"These samples are being collected from areas where we anticipate digging. The samples are being collected to characterize the nature of the soil and any contaminants that may be in the soil to ensure workers and residents will be safe," says Sokach.

Sokach says if Tower Arctic complies fully with the board's order, workers could be back on site by Monday afternoon.

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Stink uncovered

Petroleum products discovered under Iqaluit near old military tent city

by Kent Driscoll
Northern News Services

Iqaluit

Iqaluit's past has come to the surface, and it stinks. Workers installing water lines on the street running from Northmart towards the beach uncovered soil that is possibly contaminated.

Workers and residents began to notice a foul smell coming from the trench early last week, about two weeks into the summer-long project.

"We had complaints from the workers to the Workers Compensation Board and at least one complaint from a homeowner," said Brad Sokach, the director of engineering for the city.

"There is some sort of petroleum product in the soil," Sokach said.

Workers are now wearing respirators to fil-

ter out the reek. The project will continue as scheduled, and the installation of water mains is expected to be finished at the end of September.

Soil from the dig is being buried on site. Workers are trying to bury the soil at the same depth it was found, to ensure there is no other contamination, according to Sokach.

Water that ends up in the trench is being filtered and pumped to avoid run-off contamination.

The city has sent soil samples for analysis and the results are expected "in a couple of days," Sokach said.

"Historical land use" is to blame in Sokach's opinion. Aerial photos of the site in the 1960s mark it as an industrial area.

One photo shows there was a tent city for stevedores who unloaded the sealifts to support the American military base in the summer.

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