



# Fugitive Dust and Health in Detroit:

The Issue and Action Steps for Community Members (or Michigan Decision Makers)

## What is fugitive dust?

Fugitive dust is a mixture of dust particles from sources like scrapyards, unpaved industrial yards, and construction sites. These particles are often spread from these places by wind and trucks to neighborhoods.

## Where is the fugitive dust in my neighborhood coming from?

### Industrial Sources (e.g. Concrete Crushers & Scrapyards)

Throughout Metro Detroit, a number of companies have or are applying for permits to build or expand activities that may lead to more fugitive dust. These include many concrete crushing facilities and scrapyards.<sup>2</sup>

Residents nearby these places often experience dust coating their homes and cars, as well as new or worsening health issues.<sup>2</sup> These facilities likely contribute to health inequities, as they are often located in densely populated neighborhoods where the majority of residents are people of color.



*Piles of crushed concrete at Dino-Mite Crushing Recycling in Detroit. Photo: Quinn Banks / BridgeDetroit*

### Transportation Sources

Trucks driving throughout the city, often through residential neighborhoods, kick up dust that is settled along the sides of the road.

Trucks carrying various materials are often seen with clouds of dust blowing out of the trailer, such as in this photo taken by a Detroit resident.<sup>3</sup>



We would like to acknowledge the Stakeholder Action Board for their contributions and expertise.

## How does fugitive dust affect my health?

Fugitive dust in Detroit often contains harmful toxins and metals. These can lead to serious health effects. In the short term, when you breathe or touch fugitive dust, it can irritate your eyes, skin, throat, and lungs. Over time, ongoing exposure can cause:

- Skin allergies
- Worsened asthma and other breathing issues
- Increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and cancer
- Harm to the liver, pancreas, hormones, and immune response



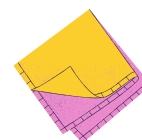
Also, we know that:

- Concrete dust often contains high levels of PM2.5 and silica. Both pollutants are known to have negative impacts on health, such as severe lung damage.<sup>2</sup>
- Dust from scrapyards that process metals may contain lead, cadmium, arsenic, or manganese—all which have a variety of known health effects.

## Ways to protect your household from fugitive dust

When possible, you can:

- Take off shoes when entering the house
- Clean in ways that reduces dust:
  - Use microfiber cloths to clean surfaces in your home
  - Vacuum with a special 'HEPA' filter
  - Clean blinds, sheets, blankets, and anywhere dust tends to settle regularly
- Make sure your home is well insulated
- Keep doors and windows closed if near sources of fugitive dust
- Install air filters or make a low-cost homemade indoor air filter <sup>4</sup>
- Grow plants around your house
- Prevent children from playing in soil, have them use a sandbox, and keep it covered when not in use



## What can I do if I am concerned about fugitive dust in my neighborhood?

Fugitive dust and industrial piles should not be taller than their surrounding walls.

If they are, you can report this to:

- City of Detroit - Buildings, Safety, Engineering, and Environmental Department: 313-571-5115
- City Council Office: 313-224-3443
- State of Michigan - 24hr Pollution Emergency Alert System (PEAS): 1-800-292-4706
- Improve Detroit App: <https://detroitmi.gov/ImproveDetroit>
- Wayne County Road Commission, District 1 – Wyoming Yard: 313-933-4705
- Air Quality Division's Detroit Office at 313-456-4681
- Pollution Emergency Alerting System (PEAS) at 1-800-292-4706
- EGLE's On-Line Complaint Form: [bit.ly/49CAnNq](https://bit.ly/49CAnNq)

You can also contact your city council members to explain your concerns so they know about environmental health issues affecting residents.

Please see [http://mleead.umich.edu/Coec\\_Fact\\_Sheets.php](http://mleead.umich.edu/Coec_Fact_Sheets.php) for the citations included in this factsheet.

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