PUBLIC EXCHANGE™

Keck School of Medicine of USC

USC Dornsife Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

The Contaminant Level Evaluation & Analysis for Neighborhoods (CLEAN) Project

CLEAN is a free, rapid-response soil testing project to quickly evaluate and communicate the levels of contamination in soils in the wake of the 2025 Los Angeles wildfires. The program is available to anyone in Los Angeles County.

How It Works

Collect Your Sample

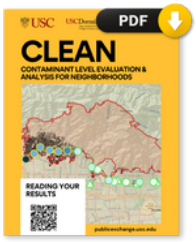
Scoop ¼ cup of soil into a zip loc bag. Fill out our survey. Label your bag.

Drop It Off or Mail It In

Mail samples in to campus or deposit them at drop box conveniently located in 6 locations across L.A. County.

Receive Results

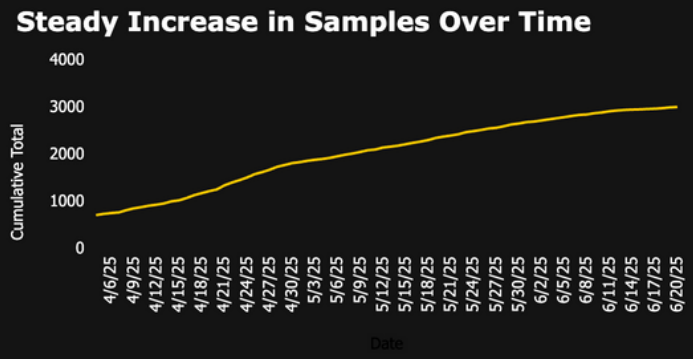
Receive test results by email, along with guidance on interpreting results.

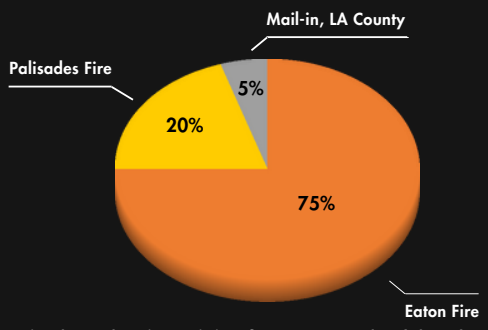


bit.ly/CLEANInterpret

Where We Are as of June 2025

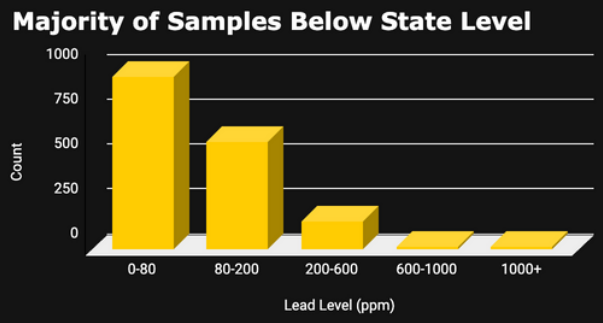
As of June 20, 2025, CLEAN has received over 3,000 samples from across L.A. County.





Pie chart showing origin of CLEAN samples (above)

Lead levels in a majority of samples tested fall below California's screening level for lead in residential soils (80 ppm), and 90% are below the EPA's level (200 ppm). Less than 1% are above 1,000 ppm, which the State of California classifies as "hazardous waste."



Where We're Headed

FIRE AID

$1 million in new funding will allow us to accelerate our processing time, test for contaminants beyond lead, develop new public health guidance, and reach underserved communities.

Early Project Findings

Samples near or within the Eaton burn scar are higher in lead than samples near the Palisades burn scar.

• Early findings suggest that lead contamination is more widespread closer to the Eaton fire than in areas closer to the Palisades fire.

• Further research is required, but this may be due to the older housing stock in Altadena relative to the Palisades.

Lead levels in samples from within the burn scar mirror lead levels in samples 2 to 5 miles away.

Samples from areas with lots of old housing show higher soil lead content.

• Further research is required, but this may partly explain why lead tends to be higher closer to the Eaton burn scar than Palisades. Altadena generally has older housing stock.

All samples tested using X-Ray Fluorescence for lead only.

• With new funding, we plan to test for contaminants such as other heavy metals and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

• Some preliminary research suggests that lead can indicate where other heavy metals have been deposited, but it may not have the same implications for PAHs, which can have different sources and may behave differently in the environment.

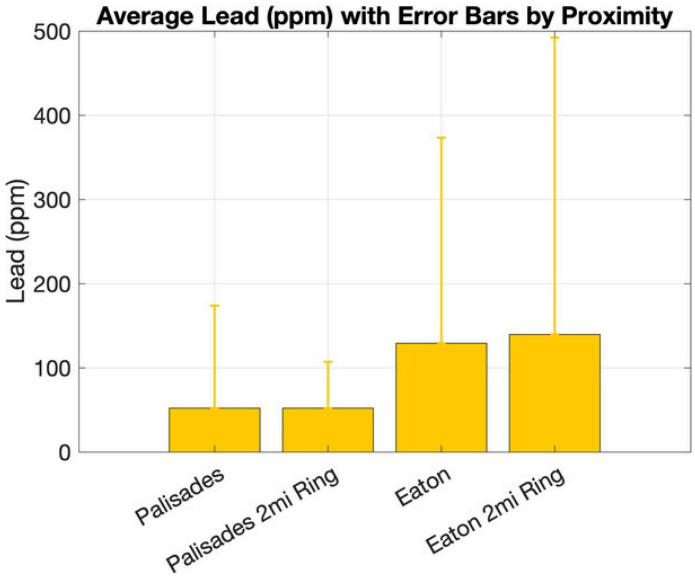


Figure 1: Bar chart showing average lead (ppm) in samples within Palisades and Eaton burn scars, and average lead of all samples within a 2 to 3 mile ring around the burn scars (e.g., "Eaton 2 mi ring"). Rings exclude all samples within scar (*only* samples within 2-3 mile ring). Outliers excluded.

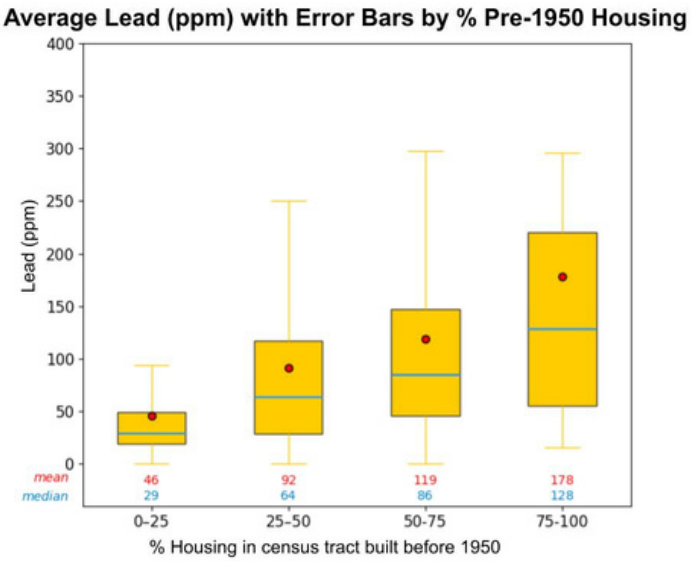


Figure 2: Box plot showing range of lead (ppm) in samples according to share of housing in census tract built before 1950. Red circles signify means (averages), boxes denote quartiles, blue horizontal lines within boxes denote medians. Outliers excluded.