

Lead issues have long plagued entire communities as a result of mining, smelting or other production of lead products. One of the worst locations for lead contamination is in the Coeur d'Alene (pronounced *Core-delay-n*) mining district (CDA), Idaho, the 43rd state¹. Bunker Hill is one of the three richest silver mines in the US, and all three are located in Shoshone County, Idaho, "one of the two richest metal mining areas in the world. This part of Idaho has produced about 2 billion dollars in metal wealth since it began in 1885... The CDA mines produce more silver than all the rest of the states together. The Bunker Hill mine is America's largest lead-silver mine"².

Bunker Hill is also a Superfund Site, which is a site where toxic wastes have been dumped and the EPA has designated them to be cleaned up³. According to the EPA, the Coeur d'Alene-Spokane River Basin contains "significant measurable risks currently exist to humans"⁴. Due to over 100 years of mining impacting the area, lead contamination in surface water "as much as 90 times exceeds" EPA standards. 300,000 citizens live within a 1,500 square mile area beginning at the Montana border and extending into Washington State, with over 166 miles of CDA River corridor, downstream water bodies, fill areas, adjacent floodplains and tributaries that are contaminated and "the most heavily impacted areas are devoid of aquatic life"⁵.

As a result of the contamination, children in this area have blood lead levels above the national CDC standards, and "one of every four children tested outside the 21 sq. mile "box" is found to have an elevated lead and are now lead poisoned. Numerous children in the Bunker Hill site are also still being tested a routine began in about 1974 and are found with elevated lead levels."⁶

Now, knowing all this, imagine turning a National Historic Landmark into a toxic waste dump. Unfortunately, such thoughts are becoming reality, as the future of the Old Mission Repository, officially known as the Mission of the Sacred Heart, is at stake. It was built by the Coeur d'Alene and Flathead native American tribes and Catholic Jesuits in the late 1800s, and one of Idaho's gems. And it's also on the Environmental Protection Agency's list to hold more than 600,000 cubic yards of toxic mine waste at the site. The agencies estimated that the pile will be more than 60 feet tall in 20-30 years, and that there will be additional health concerns, ranging from blowing dust to the location in a flood plain, or simply that only 30% of the plan is completed.

For more information, visit alphalead.org/Idaho or contact Barbara through www.imbris.net/~pacrrcco/

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idaho>

² <http://imnh.isu.edu/digitalatlas/geog/mining/minemain.htm>

³ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Superfund+site>

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<http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/EXTAFF.NSF/Reports/2006+Regional+Priorities+Coeur+d'Alene+and+Spokane+River+Basins>

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<http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/EXTAFF.NSF/Reports/2006+Regional+Priorities+Coeur+d'Alene+and+Spokane+River+Basins>

⁶ http://epw.senate.gov/107th/SilverValley_062502.htm