LEAD AZIDE DETONATION FACT SHEET FOR RESIDENTS AND FAMILIES

Middletown, Iowa

November 25th, 2026

This fact sheet provides information about the **planned and controlled detonation of unstable, degraded lead azide at the U.S. Army's Iowa Army Ammunition Plant (IAAAP) in Middletown, Iowa.** It explains why the detonation is taking place, what this means for residents and families both living near the detonation site or predicted plume, and protective measures that can be taken to reduce potential exposures. *This information is intended to help residents understand the planned operation and potential health and environmental concerns. It is not a substitute for medical advice or current guidance from emergency and public health officials.*

PUBLIC ADVISORY

POTENTIAL EXPOSURE TO TOXIC LEAD DUST

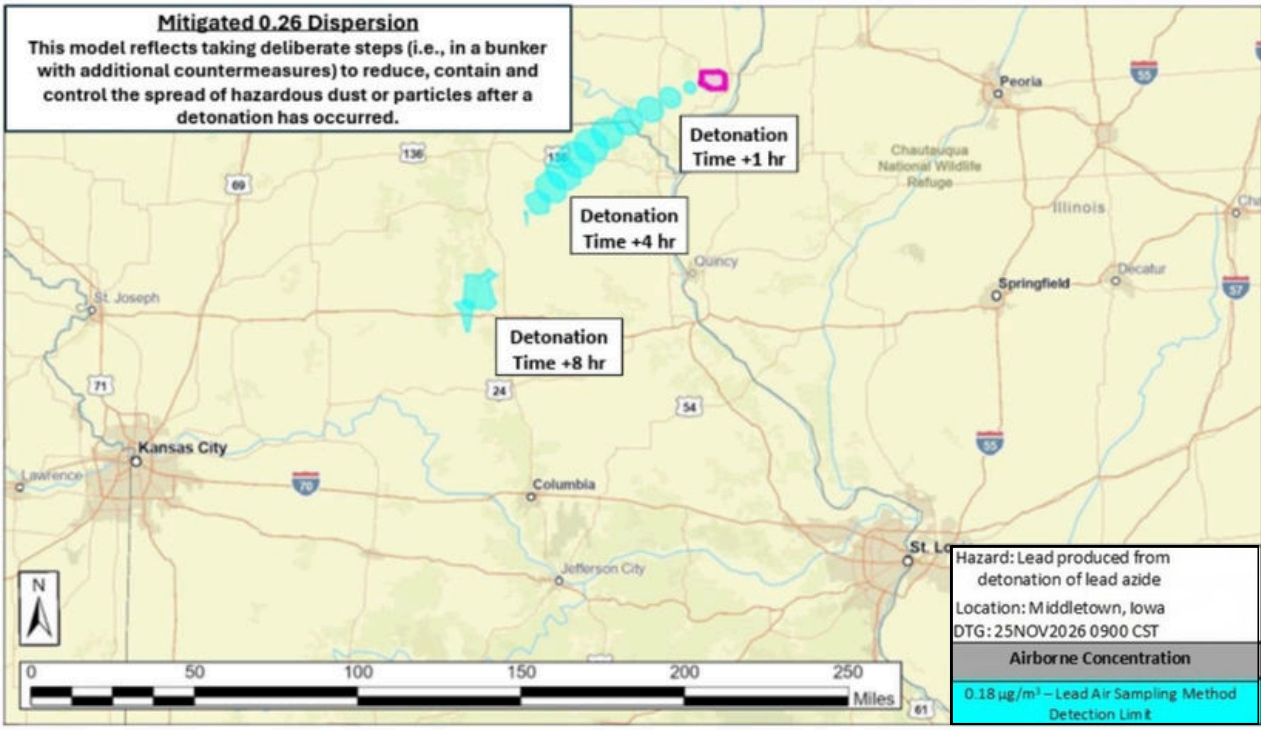
LEAD AIR DISPERSION

Consider avoiding the highlighted area or remain indoors with windows/doors closed

Children under six are especially vulnerable to lead exposure

AWAIT US ARMY TO ANNOUNCE ALL-CLEAR DETERMINATION

Issued Nov. 24, 2026



Credit: U.S. Army. Airborne Concentration. Released November 24th, 2026, 9 AM.

WHY IS THIS HAPPENING NOW?

Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middletown, Iowa, has a large amount of lead azide on site. Over time this chemical can become unstable and eventually explode. Experts have determined that this time has come – that the lead azide is unstable, so much so that the safest thing to do now is to cause the explosion first, so that we control "*the when*" and "*the how*."

The two planned and controlled detonations of degraded lead azide will occur on **Wednesday, November 25th, 2026, around 9:00 AM CST.**

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RESIDENTS

I live in or near Middletown, Iowa. What should I do?

The state and federal governments are working together to facilitate an evacuation process for families in the evacuation area starting on the 24th of November. See Press Release on following page (**McFate, 2026**):

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WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RESIDENTS

"Out of an abundance of caution, FEMA is supporting the recommended relocation for all residents of Middletown, Iowa, and immediate surrounding impacted areas commencing on Tuesday, 24 November 2026 lasting through Friday the 27th (some exceptions may be made). This defines the evacuation zone as a 5-mile cone extending southwest of IAAAP consistent with consequence management modeling, developed constantly by the Department of War's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) dispersion and deposition path (referenced below). Out of an abundance of caution, the evacuation extends one mile beyond the dispersion path (referenced below). Individuals in the surrounding area with questions or concerns about the evacuation area and eligibility can contact FEMA at 1-800-621-3362. Residents may also check the **Iowa Army Ammunition Plant website** for additional information on dispersion and deposition model status.

I live near the detonation site or in the predicted plume but not in the evacuation area. What can I do to keep myself and my family safe?

First, you can stay up to date by following the event online - (See **Government agencies to give update on detonation in Iowa** and **Lead azide detonation press conference to be held Tuesday morning**). You can watch reporting live through the Iowa Local News 5 ABC affiliate Facebook page (must log in first): **WATCH LIVE | The controlled... - We Are Iowa Local 5 News | Facebook**.

You can take general precautionary measures. Experts are recommending people stay indoors, close all windows and doors and if they have an HVAC system, to change the settings to recirculate (meaning no fresh air from the outside is let into the home until the setting is changed back). This measure would also include turning off any fans that bring in outside air (like bathroom vents and kitchen exhausts). *IF* someone has an air filter on their furnace, the army suggests changing the old filter to a new one prior to the detonation; a filter rated MERV11 or higher is suggested if possible. The HVAC system should specify what types of filters it can take.

It is recommended that people remain indoors during potential exposure periods. Experts recommend people do not drive through the affected areas, *but if they must*, they should change the ventilation settings to recirculate in the car, as well, and keep windows and doors closed as much as possible. Then one may consider changing the filters in the car (with personal protective equipment) and washing the vehicle to remove any residual dust.

For additional information, the Environmental Health Sciences Research Center (**EHSRC**) developed a helpful Factsheet with tips for Iowans **linked here**.

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PROTECTIVE MEASURES YOU CAN TAKE

Daily practices we often forget about should be reestablished:

1. Washing hands with soap and water before eating and after playing outdoors.
2. Removing one's shoes at the entrance to one's home to avoid tracking in contaminated soil
3. Wash produce that is grown in the yard before consuming to ensure any contaminated soil is removed before eating.
4. When cleaning one's home, be sure to conduct "wet cleaning," meaning, avoid dusting or sweeping, but instead wipe surfaces clean with a wet cloth or mop to ensure contaminated dust is not kicked into the air leading to more exposures.
5. Adults who work with lead outside of the home may consider removing clothes and washing them separately from other items to prevent cross contamination.
6. Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables and be sure to eat enough iron and calcium containing foods.
7. If time allows, cover vegetable garden beds with plastic sheeting.

After the detonation, can we return to normal daily life?

After the detonation and after the authorities have stated the exposure period has ended, we recommend people within proximity to the detonation site or predicted plume clean both indoor and outdoor surfaces, especially those that children touch. You can read guidance on cleaning for lead dust **here**.

I am worried we will be or have been exposed to lead. What should we do?

As with any concerns over lead exposure, if someone is worried they or a loved one has been exposed, speak to your primary care doctor. Together you can decide if a lead blood test or home assessment is warranted.

I am worried my home was contaminated from this event. What should I do?

If property damage becomes a concern, you can file a claim. This process is explained **here** in this Factsheet developed by the army.

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