The Uranium Mill Tailings Story

How uranium mill tailings may have ended up in your home.

Uranium ore was mined from mountains across the Western Slope of Colorado. The ore was taken to a uranium mill and uranium was extracted. Milled uranium was then used in the war effort or sent to nuclear power plants.

Starting in the 1940s, sand-like radioactive leftovers from the milling process, called "mill tailings," were given away for free and used in construction of homes and businesses.

The tailings contain radium, a radioactive material that gives off both gamma rays (high-energy X-rays) and radon gas as it breaks down. Both of these can cause cancer.

Uranium mill tailings can be found in Garfield, Gunnison, La Plata, Mesa, Moffat, Montrose and San Miguel counties. A cleanup program was conducted but some tailings still remain. CDPHE maintains records of these tailings.

If you would like to check your home or for more information, please contact CDPHE at 970-248-7164.

Radon gas can enter the home from the ground. Gamma rays can directly radiate into the home. A radon mitigation system can reduce radon, however shielding or removal of the mill tailings is necessary in order to reduce gamma rays.
So you may have Uranium Mill Tailings. Now what?

1. **Borrow** a meter from us:
   - We’ll show you how to use it.
   - Come to 222 S. 6th Street Room 232
   - Grand Junction, Colorado.
   - 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

2. **Decide** if you want to:
   - **Hire someone to remove the tailings**
     - We have a list of contractors we have recently worked with to get you started.
   - **Remove the tailings yourself**
     - **Use a dust mask.**
     - **Wash hands & clothes.**
     - **Don’t eat, smoke, chew or drink while digging.**
     - **Moisten soil to decrease chance of windblown tailings.**
     - **Load the tailings into a truck, trailer or buckets.**

3. **Call us** to come check the tailings removal.
   - **(970) 248-7164**
   - **Haul** tailings to interim storage cell (by appointment only). While we work to establish an interim storage facility in Durango, you will need to take the uranium mill tailings to Grand Junction for disposal.
   - **Tarp them to prevent windblown debris.**
   - **There is no disposal fee, but please call us 2-3 days prior between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to schedule disposal.**

We will visit your property to check that all tailings are removed. We will also update your property records.

**Colorado**
Department of Public Health & Environment

(970) 248-7164 | milltailings@state.co.us

July 2019