



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Advisory: Virtual Forum with Federal Officials on Danger of Lead in Homes & Water

- Who:** Greater Indianapolis NAACP, the Indianapolis Recorder, The Hoosier Environmental Council, IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute and New America
- What:** Virtual Public Forum on the Dangers of Lead in Homes and Water
- When:** 6:00 p.m., Thursday, February 25th, 2021
- Where:** The forum can be viewed live at facebook.com/IndyNAACP and facebook.com/IndyRecorder. Registration via Zoom is also available at indynaacp.org

The Greater Indianapolis Branch of the NAACP in partnership with The Indianapolis Recorder newspaper, the Hoosier Environmental Council, the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute and New America will present a virtual public forum with federal officials on the impact of lead poisoning during the Covid-19 outbreak. Guests will include:

- **Moderator, Dr. Virginia Caine**, Director, Marion County Public Health Department
- **Alfredo Gomez**, Director, Natural Resources and Environment (Water), U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Washington, DC
- **Beth A. Faraguna**, Assistant Director, Financial Markets and Community Investment (Paint), U.S. GAO, Washington, DC
- **Diane B. Raynes**, Assistant Director, Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. GAO, Washington, DC
- **Bruce P. Haber**, Director, Program and Regulatory Support Division, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, Washington, DC
- **Paul H. Diegelman**, HUD, Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, Region V, Chicago
- **Rosemary Enobakhare**, Associate Administrator for Public Engagement and Environmental Education, U.S. EPA, Washington, DC
- **Dr. Carlton Waterhouse**, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Land and Emergency Management, EPA, Washington DC
- **Cheryl Newton**, Acting Regional Administrator, U.S. EPA Region V, Chicago
- **Alan Walts**, Director, Tribal and Multimedia Programs Office, U.S. EPA Region V, Chicago

Our city is facing a silent public health crisis. Providing a wake up call, this virtual town hall will discuss the role of federal agencies in Indianapolis and across the state to reduce and eliminate the hazardous and detrimental effects of lead poisoning in our water pipes and homes.

Committing to make environmental justice a priority, President Joe Biden has issued an Executive Order directing "all federal agencies to develop programs, policies, and activities to address the disproportionate health, environmental, economic, and climate impacts on disadvantaged communities."

This forum will feature speakers from HUD, U.S. EPA as well as the Government Accountability Office, the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm that supports Congress to help improve the performance and accountability of the federal government for the American people. A [2018 GAO report](#) found that HUD should strengthen its grant processes, compliance monitoring, and performance assessments related to lead remediation in homes. A [2008 GAO report](#) also recommended that EPA's enforcement office improve the accuracy and transparency of measures used to report on program effectiveness.

This forum will bring awareness and light to our community as speakers review practices and policies to address disproportionate lead exposures affecting far too many children in Indianapolis. The panel also will discuss plans to bring resources, support and grants to help local leaders ensure equitable funding and accountability to remedy the lead crisis.

The [Washington Post reported](#) on Tuesday that the "Department of Housing and Urban Development has for years neglected to enforce its own environmental regulations, resulting in lead poisoning of children in at least one public housing development" in East Chicago and potentially jeopardizing residents' health in federal housing near other contaminated sites.

As reported by *The Post* on Feb. 17, the Office of Inspector General found that HUD's field office in Indianapolis did not conduct environmental reviews required by law, even after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency discovered high levels of lead in East Chicago housing in 1985. More than [27 percent of children in the West Calumet housing complex](#) tested between 2005 and 2015 were found to have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

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About NAACP: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest, largest and most widely recognized civil rights organization. Our mission is to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights for all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial discrimination.