

Soils Study takes to the air

By Harold Carmichael
THE SUDBURY STAR

The Sudbury Soils Study is branching out into air.

To get a good picture what City of Greater Sudbury residents are breathing, air samples will be collected every six days at nine locations over the next year.

The nine monitoring station sites are located in Copper Cliff, Falconbridge, Coniston, Garson, Hanmer, Skead, Walden, Travers Street in the west end and Algonquin Public School in the south end.

Chris Wren, SARA Group director, which is involved in the Sudbury Soils Study, said Friday that the monitoring stations will start their work Oct 6.

"There are three monitors at each different site," he said. "They suck air in for a 24-hour period. Air filters inside trap minute particles. We are then able to find out what's in the air."

Wren said the cost of the air-monitoring component of the study will be \$500,000, with Falconbridge Ltd. and Inco Ltd. picking up the tab.

The decision to conduct air-monitoring was made by the Sudbury Soils Study technical committee.

The monitoring will end after one year, with results being available in 2005.

The stations' quartz filters, which are able to trap different-sized particles, will be analyzed for more than 20 substances, including copper, nickel, cobalt and lead.

Wren said Environment Canada's meteorological data will be cross-referenced to take into account things like storms, inversions (a layer of cool air is trapped by warm air, resulting in a very stagnant pocket of air at ground level), and winds.

Wren said the monitoring stations are caged in to prevent vandalism and weather damage. He said the stations are similar to Environment Canada monitoring stations now in place across the city.



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SARA Group air monitoring specialist, Monika Greenfield (right) and Bill Trayling, Senior Environmental Officer, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, inspect air monitoring equipment.

Wren said that with soil testing work done, including vegetable gardening, and air now about to be studied, drinking water testing is also being considered.

"The name is Sudbury Soils Study," he said. "(But) we want people to know we are actually looking at other things ..."

"We may be looking at other food sources, such as food stores."

The Sudbury Soils Study, launched three years ago, is expected to cost \$5 million. It involves six community partners: Inco, Falconbridge, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Sudbury and District Health Unit, City of Greater Sudbury, and Health Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health branch.

The study is expected to be the most comprehensive assessment of its kind conducted in Ontario.

From the assessment of thousands of soil samples, the community will learn of any possible risks these metals may pose to human health and/or the health of the environment.

A consulting firm will be evaluating the potential for human health and ecological risks due to the metal levels found in these samples.

It is expected that final results of the study will be available in 2005.