

China's newest lead poisoning investigation underway in Kunming

More than 200 children in Kunming's Dongchuan district have been found to have [unsafe levels of lead](#) in their blood, the third major case of child lead poisoning in China this month.

During routine blood testing in Dongchuan's Tongdu county, more than 200 out of 1,000 children tested were found to have blood lead levels of more than 100 micrograms per liter.

Children are particularly susceptible to the effects of lead poisoning. Blood lead levels of more than 100 micrograms per liter have been found to impede normal behavior and cognitive development in children under the age of six years.

Hospital management at Tongdu's Healthcare Center for Women and Children said that the high blood lead levels among children in the area were likely due to car exhaust. Some local parents dismissed the hospital explanation, saying that a nearby industrial park was to blame.

China Daily quoted a mother from Yingpan village (营盘村), where the industrial park, which has been in operation since 2004, is located:

"There are thousands of children in Dongchuan district and other areas, so I wonder why only the kids around the industrial park have been found to have excessive lead in their blood. Who will take care of our children?"

Local environmental officials are investigating the source of the lead poisoning. Management of Yingpan's industrial park declined to discuss the lead poisonings with China Daily reporters, the paper said.

On August 13, the Wugang Manganese Smelting Plant in Hunan province was closed by local officials after more than 1,300 children living near the plant were found to have unsafe blood lead levels. Four days later on August 17, hundreds of villagers attacked a lead and zinc smelting facility in Changqing, Shaanxi province after 851 children were found to have high blood lead levels.

The three high-profile lead poisoning cases in the last month have put pressure on national and local officials to close facilities that do not meet basic environmental protection regulations. Some analysts have also suggested the lead poisoning scandal could lead to industry consolidation in addition to plant shutdowns.

The China Daily reported that the national environmental ministry ratified a new Implementation Plan on Controlling Heavy Metal Pollution, which is still waiting

approval from the Cabinet-level State Council. The regulation prescribes better cooperation between government departments to avoid further pollution by heavy metal smelting industries.

Update: The Associated Press has information about a recent government study in which it was found that [up to 60 percent of children in mining areas](#) in Yunnan are suffering from lead poisoning.

http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/1100/chinas_newest_lead_poisoning_investigation_underway_in_kunming