

My Way Trading Warehouse Fire

Frequently Asked Questions

Current as of 4/24/2023

Richmond Community Helpline: 765-973-9300

Website: response.epa.gov/MyWayTradingWarehouse

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Evacuation Order & Returning Home

- **When was the evacuation order lifted?**

The evacuation order was lifted by the Wayne County Emergency Management Agency on Sunday April 16, at 4 p.m.

- **Are schools, businesses, and medical offices still closed?**

School officials continue to be apprised of the situation and are making individual decisions on whether they will operate under normal or altered schedules. If you are concerned about business or doctor office hours, please call ahead to the location to ensure they are open.

- **How do we protect our pets?**

- Keep cats indoors in debris-impacted areas.
- Dogs should be kept on a leash when outside in debris-impacted areas.
- Do not let pets drink water from puddles, or drink water or eat food that was outside during the incident.
- If dogs or cats get ash on their paws or bodies, wash it off promptly.
- If pet toys were outside, wash them before use.

The Warehouse Fire & Incident Response

- **Where and how did the fire start?**

The cause of the fire is unknown and likely will not be known for weeks or months. The State Fire Marshal's Office is assisting with the investigation.

- **How long will the investigation take? When will we know definitive answers?**

The investigation surrounding the fire may take several weeks, or even months, as it is a difficult process.

Several agencies will continue to be involved, and it is very important for those agencies to take their time to ensure objectivity.

- **Is the fire out?**

Yes, the Richmond fire chief declared the fire was officially out on the afternoon of Tuesday, April 18.

Debris Collection & Cleaning

- **What should I do if I find debris in my yard or on my property?**

EPA recommends residents should not disturb debris that may have come from the My Way Trading warehouse fire. Debris may contain asbestos; disturbing debris may lead to asbestos exposure. EPA is coordinating with local officials to prioritize areas where debris will be collected including schools and daycares, public parks and residences in Indiana and Ohio.

EPA is offering to safely remove debris from all yards and outdoor areas. EPA contractors are searching for debris from the fire, flagging what they find, and removing it. The crews place flags next to any debris they find to mark their location and will remove the flags as debris are collected. EPA crews wear gloves and use tongs while picking up debris. As a precautionary measure, EPA will collect all debris identified at the property.

EPA is offering free debris collection. To have EPA come to your home to pick up debris, please fill out the access agreement in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) and email Rachel at linduska.rachel@epa.gov.

Do not remove or disturb any debris. Asbestos is a hazardous substance that releases microscopic fibers into the air when disturbed. EPA is coordinating with local officials to prioritize the collection of debris at schools, daycares, city parks and residences in Indiana and Ohio.

- **Is it safe to resume mowing and working in my yard?**

If you do not have any debris on your property or EPA has removed debris from your yard, it is safe to mow your lawn and conduct other yard activities (e.g. leaf blowing). EPA conducted robust activity-based sampling at properties where debris was removed, to ensure no asbestos particles from activities such as mowing and leaf blowing would have the potential to be in the air. After the debris was removed, agency contractors took air samples as they mowed the lawn and used a leaf blower. Throughout the rigorous two-day air sampling process, EPA results showed no asbestos. EPA has determined that once the debris is removed from the yard, it is safe to resume outdoor activities as normal.

- **How do I clean my property?**

Indoor

Free indoor cleanup kits are available at the Wayne County Health Department, 100 S. Fifth Street, Richmond. The Wayne County Health Department has provided detailed instructions on how and what to clean in your home or business. The Cleaning Instruction Sheet is available on the city of Richmond's website: www.richmondindiana.gov/news/warehouse-fire-information. General guidance is that normal household cleaning supplies are recommended. Odors from the fire may linger but are not deemed harmful. Heating and ventilation air filters can be replaced to reduce potential odors. Lightly wetting filters prior to disturbing can reduce generation of dust.

Outdoor

Debris may contain asbestos, and asbestos exposure may be harmful. EPA is offering free debris collection. To have EPA come to your home to pick up debris, please fill out the access agreement in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) in our documents section and email Rachel at linduska.rachel@epa.gov.

EPA's debris collection procedures are designed to protect workers and the public. Crews will:

- Inspect roofing, gutters, downspouts, outdoor furniture, playsets, swimming pools, lawns and landscaping for visible debris.
- Wet debris prior to pick up, to reduce the potential to create asbestos in dust form.
- Use gloves and tools, such as tongs, when handling debris to reduce contact and contamination of hands.
- Collect debris from swimming pool filters.
- Place debris into plastic bags, with about a quart of water in the bottom of the bag to ensure debris stays wetted.
- Seal debris in an inner and outer plastic bag for extra precaution pending disposal.
- Ensure proper waste handling to prevent breaking open trash bags.
- Wash hands and faces prior to eating, drinking and smoking, to reduce the potential for inhaling or ingesting contamination.

Health Impacts

- **Should I be wearing cloth, surgical, or N95 masks in the area?**

Cloth and surgical masks do filter out larger particulate matter; however, finer particles would require an N95-type mask. The Wayne County Health Department recommends wearing a mask while doing any cleanup of soot due to the potential of particulate matter. If you would like a supply of masks, please visit the Wayne County Health Department, 100 S Fifth Street, Richmond. You may also call 765-973-9245.

Air Quality

- **What has air monitoring and air sampling data shown to date?**

Once the fire was extinguished, EPA did not detect volatile organic compounds or particulate matter emissions above background levels. After consulting with the city of Richmond and Wayne County, EPA ceased air monitoring and sampling the night of April 19. EPA posted roving and stationary air monitoring data to the [website](#). EPA also posted some final, validated air sample results and will post more as they become available.

- **What's the difference between air monitoring and air sampling?**

The goal of **air monitoring** at the fire site was to quickly detect contaminants in the air so that actions can be taken to protect the safety of the first responders. Air monitoring uses electronic devices to measure concentrations of contaminants. These devices can be set up quickly and collect real-time air data. These data are used to guide actions in the field by indicating the location of the chemicals in the air which may be of concern. Stationary (not moving) and mobile (moving or roving) air monitors provide continuous real-time data of air contamination to inform when concentrations rise above thresholds.

Air sampling involves collection of air for laboratory analysis. The purpose of air sampling is to measure how much of a specific contaminant is present in the air over a period of time. For this response, samples are collected over 24-hours and are submitted to a laboratory for analysis.

Water Quality

- **Is the drinking water supply safe?**

Those hooked up to municipal water receive their water from Indiana American Water, which has been closely monitoring drinking water. They report no unusual readings, nor any concerning sample results related to the fire.

- **Can people and/or animals safely be in contact with downstream surface water, such as the Whitewater River?**

The Richmond Sanitary District and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management have collected water samples from the river and its tributaries. While some sample results, such as ammonia, dissolved oxygen levels, pH, and chemical oxygen demand have come back within normal levels, the sanitary district is still waiting for sample results for volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, semi-volatile organic compounds, and heavy metals. This data will be released as it is received, and at that point, local health officials will determine if the water is safe to swim in. The river and its tributaries will continue to be monitored. There have been no reports of fish kills or disturbances to wildlife.

- **What if I have additional questions or concerns? Who can I call?**

A 24-hour Community Help Line is available, and will remain available, for anyone that has additional questions or concerns. Please call 765-973-9300 to speak with someone.

- **Are there additional resources available?**

City of Richmond: www.richmondindiana.gov/news/warehouse-fire-information

Wayne County Emergency Management Agency: <https://www.co.wayne.in.us/web/dept/ema/index.php>

Indiana Department of Homeland Security Fire Marshal Office:

Email: pio@dhs.in.gov

Phone: 463-202-4063

Environmental Protection Agency: response.epa.gov/MyWayTradingWarehouse