

**Office of Governor Brad Henry**

**State of Oklahoma**



**State Capitol - Oklahoma City OK 73105  
405-521-2342**

**Gov. Henry puts Tar Creek voluntary relocation plan in motion**

**August 31, 2004**

Oklahoma City – Gov. Brad Henry has taken action to implement a new law that will deliver long-awaited assistance to many residents in the Tar Creek Superfund site. Senate Bill 1490, which goes into effect this week, authorizes a voluntary relocation program for families with young children in the most hazardous part of the abandoned mining area in northeastern Oklahoma.

The governor Tuesday announced the appointment of a local trust authority that will administer the program. The nine-member Lead-Impacted Communities Relocation Assistance Trust will process and approve applications for relocation assistance.

"We've worked very hard to lay the groundwork necessary to put the program in motion as soon as the law goes into effect," said Gov. Henry. "The appointment of the trust authority brings us one step closer to accepting applications and moving eligible families and their children out of the area. The sooner we can get them out of harm's way, the better."

The governor said the trust authority is expected to meet September 8 to finalize the application form and process. Shortly thereafter, it will begin accepting applications from families in Picher and Cardin.

Under the provisions of SB 1490, families with children aged six years and younger in the towns of Picher and Cardin will receive state assistance to relocate to a safer area. It is estimated that 100 families could qualify for the voluntary relocation.

Research indicates children in that age bracket are most at risk for the kind of lead exposure that has commonly occurred around the old mining sites in the area. Lead exposure in children can cause a number of health problems, including learning disabilities.

Gov. Henry announced the \$5 million voluntary relocation effort in January after discussing the issue with local residents. The governor reiterated that local input will continue to play a vital role in the program.

"Because local residents have played such a critical role in the development of this initiative, I thought it was only appropriate for them to comprise a majority of the trust authority," said the governor. "They know their communities best, and I want them involved at every stage of the implementation process."

The Oklahoma Legislature allocated \$3 million to the initiative this year, and legislative leaders have committed to appropriate an additional \$2 million next year. The governor stressed that the state initiative did not relieve the federal government or the mining companies of their continued responsibilities in the Superfund area.

“This initiative is not the final word on Tar Creek,” said Gov. Henry. “It is one good-faith effort to help as many children as possible with the limited state resources available. I will continue to work to ensure this area receives the broader assistance it deserves from the federal government and the mining interests.”

#### Lead-impacted Communities Relocation Assistance Trust

- Eddie Wyant, Ottawa County District Attorney
- Sam Freeman, Mayor of Picher
- Mike McCoy, Cardin Town Trustee
- John Sparkman, Executive Director, Picher Housing Authority
- Dr. Mark Osborn, Physician, Miami
- Bob Walker, Superintendent of Picher-Cardin Schools
- Anne Woody, Executive Director, Oklahoma Real Estate Commission
- Tamara Summerfield, Quapaw Tribal Business Councilwoman
- State Rep. Larry Roberts (Trust chairman)

Text of SB 1490 can be found at: [www.lsb.state.ok.us](http://www.lsb.state.ok.us)