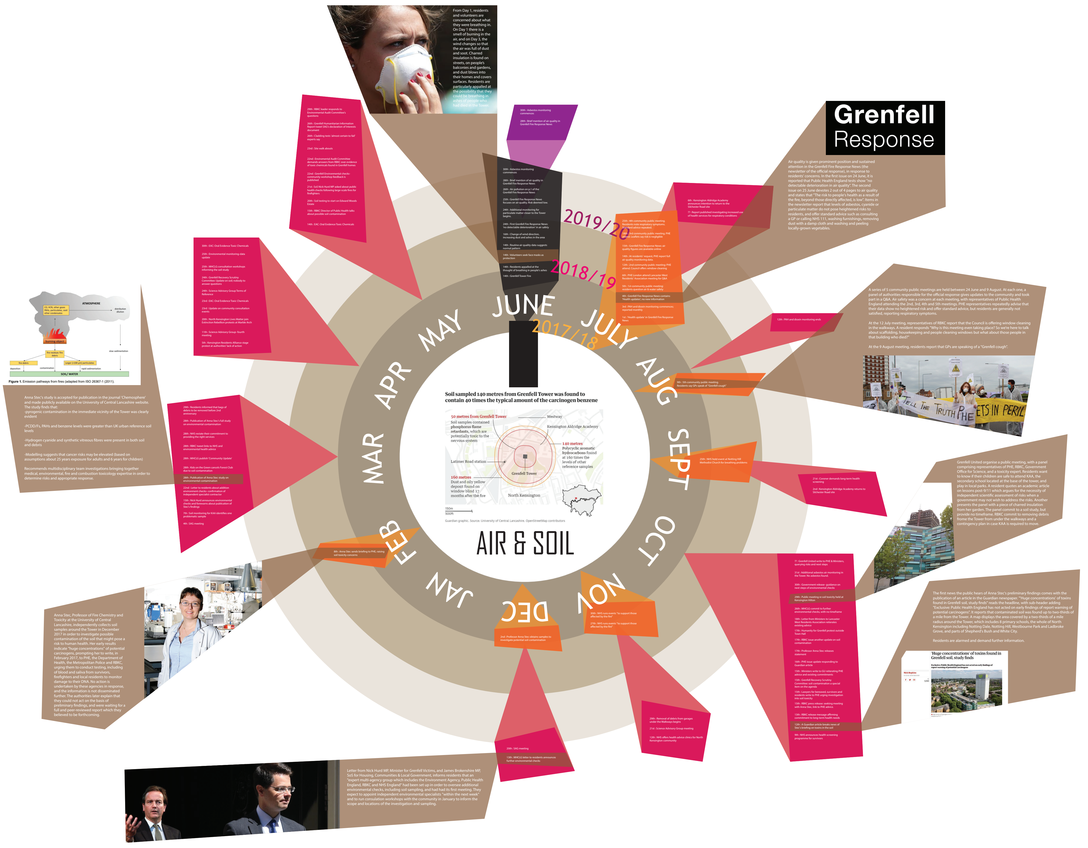
Grenfell Response
AIR & SOIL
MAR
APR
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUG
SEPT
OCT
NOV
DEC
JAN
FEB
2017/18
2018/19
2019/20
Soil sampled 140 metres from Grenfell Tower was found to contain 40 times the typical amount of the carcinogen benzene
10 metres from Grenfell Tower
soil samples contained phosphorus flame retardants which are potentially toxic to the nervous system
140 metres
Drain and silty mellow topsoil samples had relative lifetime (1 + months after tire fire
1.40 metres
Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon benzene at 165 times the levels of urban reference samples
Whitefriar
Kensington Aldridge Academy
Latimer Road station
Grenfell Tower
North Kensington
Source: Grenfell Tower Independent Residents Group
Illustration graphic: Source: University of Central Lancashire. Open Knowledge contributors
Figure 1: Emission pathways from fires (adapted from ISO 26367-1:2011).
Anna Stec, Professor of Fire Chemistry and Toxicity at the University of Central Lancashire, independently collects soil samples around the Tower in December and January. She is looking for any contamination of the soil that might pose a risk to human health. Her early results suggest that there are no significant chemical carcinogens, prioritising fire safety, to Hazard 2017, ALPHA. The Government's Chemical Hazards and Poisons Division is urging them to conduct testing, including of blood and urine from survivors.
Stec's research has found evidence of thermal damage to their DNA. No action is undertaken by these agencies in response. Stec's research is being taken forward further. The authorities later explain that they could not act on the basis of preliminary findings, and were waiting for a full scientific report and results which are believed to be forthcoming.
Lamar Ross Mick Pearl MP, Minister for Grenfell Victims, and James Brokenshire MP, Lead Housing Government, & Local Government visited on the "expert" multi-agency group which includes the Environment Agency, Public Health England, MHCLG and NHS England" had been set up in order to narrow additional experimental checks, including soil sampling, and had left in its first meeting. The Grenfell Tower Independent Residents Group (GTIRG) and the Grenfell Tower Health Forum held constructive workshops with the community in January to inform the scope and locations of the investigation and sampling.
From Day 1, residents and volunteers are concerned about what is in the smoke. On Day 1 there is a smell of burning in the air. On Day 2 a sea of changes is that the air was full of dust and ash. Dust and insulation is found on streets, on people's clothes, in gardens and dust blows into their homes and cooks food. Residents are particularly upset at the possibility that they could be exposed to asbestos, which is a hazard when disturbed.
Air quality is given prominent positive and sustained reassurance by the Government, based on the assumptions of the official briefings, in response to residents' concerns. In the first issue on 24 June, it's reassurance that "Government is working with the relevant authorities to monitor air quality". The second issue on 21 June denotes 2 out of 4 pages to air quality reassurance. The third issue on 5 July reports on the fire in the Grenfell Tower directly attributed to soot. Some of the newsletter report that levels of asbestos, cyanide or particulate matter do not pose long-term risks to residents. Residents are given advice that includes washing a CP or calling NHS 111, washing furnishings, removing dust with a damp cloth and washing and peeling locally grown vegetables.
A series of 3 community public meetings are held between 24 June and 9 August. At each one, a panel of authorities responsible for the official response give updates to the community and took questions. The panel at the first meeting on 28 June included the Mayor of London, the England Minister, the LFB, the LA, the Ombudsman, PHE representatives nationally, notes that most data show no heightened risk and offer standard advice, but residents are generally not satisfied, reporting respiratory symptoms.
At the 13 July meeting, representatives of MHC report that the Council is offering window cleaning of the walkways. A resident responds: "Why is this meeting even taking place? So we're here to talk about the fire, but we're chopping and people cleaning windows but what about those people in that building who died?"
At the 9 August meeting, residents report that GPs are speaking of a "Grenfell cough".
Grenfell United organise a public meeting, with a panel comprising representatives of PHE, MHCLG, Government Office for Science, and a toxicity expert. Residents want to know if their children are safe to attend KAA, for example, and if the Tower should be demolished as a play in rural parks. A resident quotes an academic article on Hazard 2017, which argues for the necessity of demolition. The toxicity expert says that the government may not wish to address the risks. Another presents the panel with a piece of charred insulation from the gardens. The panel commit to a soil study, but residents report that the Council's contractors advise those the Tower from under the walkways and a contingency plan in case KAA is required to move.
The first voice the public hears of Anna Stec's preliminary findings comes with the publication of an article in the Guardian newspaper. "Huge concentration" of toxins found in Grenfell soil, study finds" reads the headline, with sub-header adding "Toxicologist Anna Stec in England has found alarming levels of toxins in soil samples from Grenfell Tower". The article goes on to describe the soil found up to two miles of a site from the Tower. A map displays the areas covered by a two-limits of a site radius around the Tower, which includes 6 primary schools, the whole of North Kensington, the Grenfell Tower, Latimer Road station, Kensington Park and Ladbroke Grove, and parts of Shepherd's Bush and Milton City.
Residents are alarmed and demand further information.
Huge concentrations of toxins found in Grenfell soil, study finds
Toxicologist Anna Stec found alarming levels of toxins in samples taken from the area surrounding Grenfell Tower
Anna Stec
Tue 23 Jan 2018 08.00 EST
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Grenfell Tower
Stec's research has found alarming levels of toxins in samples taken from the area surrounding Grenfell Tower. Photo: Alamy
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ATMOSPHERE
Contaminated soil
Contaminated groundwater
SOIL/WATER
Ingestion
Inhalation
Dermal contact
Dermal contact
SOIL/WATER