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China reports new lead poisoning case



(Reuters) - More than 200 children living beside an industrial park in southwest China have been found to have excessive lead in their blood, state media said on Monday, in the third such case reported in the last month.

Health authorities tested around 1,000 children in a neighborhood of the city of Kunming, the official China Daily said.

"Their levels are all higher than 100 micrograms of lead in each liter of blood but lower than 200 micrograms per liter," the newspaper quoted a medical doctor, Wu Ling, as saying.

Lead poisoning can build up slowly and occurs from repeated exposure to small amounts of lead which can harm a child's mental development. Health problems get more severe as the level of lead in the blood gets higher.

Parents are blaming the poisoning on a nearby industrial park, the report added, though the local environmental protection bureau denies there is a direct link with industrial pollutants.

The environmental bureau said the case has been caused by factors such as exhaust emissions.

"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," a local mother was cited as saying.

Earlier this month, more than 800 children living near a metal smelter in northwest Shaanxi province were found to have dangerous amounts of lead in their blood, and more than 150 were sent to hospital.

The same problem also dogs heavy metals bases in Hunan, Henan, Yunnan and Guangdong provinces.



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At least three lead smelters in Henan province and two in Shaanxi province were ordered to temporarily halt production after protests against pollution at a lead and zinc smelter in Shaanxi.

(Reporting by Huang Yan and [Ben Blanchard](#); Editing by [Bill Tarrant](#))

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE57U2AC20090831>