

# Urban Soil Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons: Sources, Impact, Remediation

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## Introduction

The pervasive presence of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) in urban and industrial environments represents a significant ecological and public health concern. These ubiquitous organic contaminants, primarily originating from incomplete combustion processes, are known for their persistence and potential carcinogenicity. A foundational study by Khan et al. (2021) meticulously investigated the occurrence and distribution of PAHs within soil samples from diverse urban-industrial locations, identifying key sources and assessing environmental impact through toxic equivalency factors (TEFs). Their findings emphasized the substantial accumulation of high molecular weight PAHs, strongly suggesting the dominance of combustion-related activities as a primary contributor to soil contamination [1].

Further dissecting the anthropogenic influences, Li et al. (2022) explored the differential impacts of various land-use types on soil PAH contamination. Their comparative analysis of agricultural, residential, and industrial zones elucidated how human activities directly shape PAH profiles and concentrations. This research underscores the critical necessity for developing tailored environmental management strategies that acknowledge and address the unique characteristics of specific land-use areas to effectively mitigate PAH risks [2].

Understanding the long-term behavior of these persistent pollutants requires an examination of their spatial distribution within soil profiles. Guo et al. (2023) delved into the vertical distribution and source apportionment of PAHs in soil profiles at a former industrial site. Utilizing advanced gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) techniques, they identified distinct PAH patterns at varying depths, indicative of historical contamination from past industrial operations and subsequent soil erosion processes. This detailed understanding is crucial for effective remediation planning [3].

Urban transportation networks are another significant contributor to soil PAH burdens. Liu et al. (2020) quantified PAH levels in roadside soils, establishing a strong correlation between proximity to major roadways, traffic density, and elevated PAH concentrations. Their work particularly highlighted PAHs associated with the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, thereby emphasizing the environmental impact of urban transit systems [4].

Beyond direct deposition, hydrological systems can also play a crucial role in the dispersal of PAHs within urban landscapes. Li et al. (2022) investigated the influence of a major urban river on the distribution of PAHs in adjacent soils. Their study considered factors such as water-sediment interactions and potential atmospheric deposition from surrounding urban activities, providing valuable insights into how aquatic pathways can facilitate PAH dissemination [5].

Once present in the soil, PAHs can pose risks to the broader ecosystem through bioaccumulation. Xu et al. (2023) assessed the bioaccumulation potential and ecotoxicological risks of PAHs in soil organisms, specifically examining their concentrations in earthworms and soil microflora. This research illuminates how these contaminants can enter the food web, impacting overall ecosystem health and emphasizing the need for comprehensive environmental risk assessments [6].

Addressing the challenge of PAH contamination necessitates effective remediation strategies. Liu et al. (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of various soil washing techniques for PAH removal. By comparing the efficacy of different washing agents and operational parameters, their study offered valuable data for the development of efficient and sustainable methods to clean up PAH-contaminated soils [7].

The dynamic nature of soil PAH contamination also warrants attention. Li et al. (2021) investigated the seasonal variations of PAHs in urban soils, exploring how environmental factors such as temperature and precipitation influence their distribution and persistence. Their findings highlight the importance of considering temporal dynamics in environmental monitoring and management [8].

Atmospheric transport serves as another significant pathway for PAH contamination. Dong et al. (2022) examined the contribution of atmospheric deposition to soil PAH contamination in an industrially active region. By analyzing PAH composition in both soil and air samples, they quantified the impact of airborne PAHs and discussed associated transport mechanisms, providing critical information for source identification [9].

Finally, the potential for biological solutions in managing PAH contamination is an area of active research. Yang et al. (2023) explored the efficacy of bioremediation using microbial consortia for treating PAH-contaminated soils. Their laboratory-based evaluation of microbial degradation capabilities offers promising insights into the feasibility of biological approaches for soil cleanup efforts [10].

## Description

The complex issue of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH) contamination in urban and industrial soils has been extensively explored through a variety of research avenues. Khan et al. (2021) provided a broad overview of PAH presence and distribution in urban-industrial areas, identifying combustion as a major source of high molecular weight PAHs and highlighting the importance of risk assessment through toxic equivalency factors [1].

Delving into the impact of human land use, Li et al. (2022) conducted a comparative study across agricultural, residential, and industrial zones. Their work

demonstrated that distinct land-use practices lead to differing PAH profiles and concentrations, thereby underscoring the need for land-use-specific environmental management plans to mitigate PAH risks effectively [2].

Investigating the historical legacy of industrial activity, Guo et al. (2023) focused on the vertical distribution and sources of PAHs in soil profiles at a former industrial site. Their use of GC-MS revealed distinct PAH signatures at various soil depths, pointing to historical industrial operations and erosion as key factors influencing long-term contamination patterns [3].

Roadside soils are particularly susceptible to contamination from vehicular emissions. Liu et al. (2020) established a strong correlation between traffic density, proximity to roadways, and elevated PAH levels. Their research emphasized the role of incomplete fossil fuel combustion in contributing to the PAH burden in these environments [4].

Urban rivers can act as conduits for PAH dispersal within cityscapes. Li et al. (2022) examined the distribution of PAHs in soils adjacent to a major urban river, considering the interplay between water-sediment dynamics and atmospheric deposition, thus illustrating how hydrological features influence contaminant spread [5].

The ecological implications of soil PAH contamination were addressed by Xu et al. (2023), who investigated bioaccumulation in soil organisms like earthworms and microflora. This study highlighted the potential for PAHs to enter the food web and impact ecosystem health, emphasizing the necessity of a comprehensive ecotoxicological risk assessment [6].

For contaminated sites, effective remediation is paramount. Liu et al. (2020) assessed the efficiency of various soil washing techniques, providing essential data on the performance of different washing agents and parameters for developing practical cleanup solutions [7].

Understanding the temporal dynamics of PAH contamination is crucial for monitoring and management. Li et al. (2021) explored seasonal variations of PAHs in urban soils, identifying how environmental factors such as temperature and precipitation affect PAH distribution and persistence, thereby informing dynamic environmental monitoring strategies [8].

The contribution of airborne pollutants to soil contamination was a focus for Dong et al. (2022). Their research quantified the impact of atmospheric deposition on soils near industrial sources by analyzing PAH composition in both air and soil samples, and elucidating transport mechanisms [9].

Finally, the potential for biological remediation offers a sustainable approach to managing PAH-contaminated soils. Yang et al. (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of microbial consortia in degrading PAHs under controlled laboratory settings, providing foundational insights into the viability of bioremediation as a soil cleanup technology [10].

## Conclusion

This collection of studies investigates Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) in urban and industrial soils, examining their sources, distribution, and environmental impact. Research highlights combustion-related activities, land use, vehicular emissions, and atmospheric deposition as key contributors to PAH contamination. Studies also explore the vertical distribution in soil profiles, the role of urban rivers in dispersal, and the bioaccumulation of PAHs in soil organisms, posing ecotoxicological risks.

Effective remediation strategies, including soil washing and bioremediation, are being developed. The dynamic nature of PAH contamination, influenced by seasonal variations and environmental factors, necessitates integrated monitoring and management approaches.

## Acknowledgement

None.

## Conflict of Interest

None.

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**How to cite this article:** Sharma, Rahul. "Urban Soil Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons: Sources, Impact, Remediation." *J Environ Anal Toxicol* 15 (2025):850.

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**Received:** 02-Jun-2025, Manuscript No. jeat-26-188632; **Editor assigned:** 04-Jun-2025, PreQC No. P-188632; **Reviewed:** 18-Jun-2025, QC No. Q-188632; **Revised:** 23-Jun-2025, Manuscript No. R-188632; **Published:** 30-Jun-2025, DOI: 10.37421/2161-0525.2025.15.850

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