The Timeline of Unleaded Petrol

Print one copy of this activity sheet per group of students. Cut each row into strips, mix them up and distribute to groups to place in chronological order. Please note that the sheet is currently in the correct chronological order.

Clair Patterson worked on determining the Earth's age using lead isotopes in zircon crystals, discovering unusually high levels of lead contamination.
Clair Patterson identified that lead contamination was widespread in the environment.
Clair Patterson studied lead levels in various sources, including ocean water, ice cores, and human tissues, revealing a dramatic increase since the Industrial Revolution.
Patterson linked the majority of environmental lead pollution to tetraethyl lead, a chemical additive used in petrol to increase engine performance.
Clair Patterson published a key scientific paper demonstrating tetraethyl lead's harmful impact on the environment and human health.
The lead industry, including the American Petroleum Institute, attempted to discredit Patterson’s findings and cut off his research funding, claiming lead was naturally occurring and harmless.
Clair Patterson worked to educate the public on the dangers of lead exposure, emphasising its effects on cognitive development and health, particularly in children.
Patterson’s research contributed to the U.S. Clean Air Act, which led to the Environmental Protection Agency’s investigation and regulation of leaded petrol.
The Environmental Protection Agency began reducing the allowable tetraethyl lead content in petrol during the 1970s, and a full ban in the United States by 1996, and in Australia in 2002.
Clair Patterson’s efforts not only led to the global elimination of leaded petrol but also established an important example for addressing other industrial pollutants and protecting public health.