1500 Skokie Asbestos Site  
Northbrook, Illinois

Frequently Asked Questions

I understand that the building was "sealed" by the state. What does that mean?

Because the recent renovation work on the third floor was improperly conducted, it created a situation that posed an imminent danger to human health and the environment, and the Illinois EPA placed a seal order on the building. When conditions at a site present a risk or danger to public health and the environment, the state may place it under seal order to restrict public access. In this case, asbestos contamination was found throughout the building.

Is there a penalty associated with violating a seal order?

Yes. A person who violates a seal order of the state by trespassing is subject to a fine of up to $1000 and up to 364 days in jail. Remember that the seal order was placed on the property to protect the public by warning them to stay away from the site.

Why did tenants have to evacuate the building?

The asbestos contamination found in the building could present a health risk to the tenants. Asbestos exposure has been shown, under certain circumstances, to be associated with lung disease, both cancer and non-cancer effects.

Until the building owner has cleaned the whole building of asbestos contamination, the order will not be lifted. No one may enter the building except licensed contractors who have written authorization from the Director of Illinois EPA.

How long will the businesses have to stay out of the building?

We do not know at this time how long it will take to clean up the asbestos contamination. The property owners and their contractors have developed a Comprehensive Project Design Plan under an Agreed Interim Order with Illinois EPA and the Attorney General's Office. They began cleanup work on Monday, March 19, 2001. We hope to be able to issue an "all clear" by mid-April.

I work in this building. Renovation of several floors has happened over the last 3 to 4 years. Why is the asbestos removal just now an issue?

While the Illinois EPA was notified of previous renovation efforts that involved asbestos removal, the work on the third floor is the first instance of the Agency's learning of actual violations of federal and state rules governing asbestos removals.

What is being done to eliminate asbestos from the building?

Besides properly abating the third floor of asbestos-containing materials, the rest of the building (including stairwells and elevator) needs to be cleaned of asbestos contamination.

Once the cleanup work is complete, will it be safe to return to the building?

Illinois EPA intends to inspect the activities at 1500 Skokie while the work proceeds to make sure that proper precautions are taken. Once the work is complete and the site is deemed "clean", tenants may once again inhabit the building. Clearance air monitoring will be performed in accordance with federal standards and will insure that the building is safe to inhabit.

How do I know whether previous exposures, during past activities at this location, may have endangered my health?
The Illinois EPA has no asbestos air concentration data for the time periods of previous site work. Consequently, we cannot answer that question.

**How does asbestos damage one’s health?**

U.S. EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry have developed fact sheets and a toxicological profile on asbestos explaining long-term health effects due to repeated, high-level exposures, such as those experienced by workers in an industrial setting. Those effects include asbestosis (scarring of the lungs), lung cancer or other lung disease. No studies are available on the acute (short-term) effects of asbestos exposure in animals or humans. In addition, the OSHA website has a fact sheet about the hazards of working with asbestos. Another fact sheet available through the Illinois EPA provides a general understanding of the statutory and regulatory requirements governing managing asbestos. Links to these fact sheets are provided below.

**Asbestos related fact sheets**

- How Do I Manage Asbestos In My Building?  
  [Illinois Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.develop.epa.state.il.us/communit...)
- Better Protection Against Asbestos In The Workplace [EXIT]  
  [U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA](http://www.develop.epa.state.il.us/communit...)
- Asbestos [EXIT]  
  [U.S. EPA Office of Air Quality Planning & Standards](http://www.develop.epa.state.il.us/communit...)
- Questions and Answers: Expose to Asbestos [EXIT]  
  [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry](http://www.develop.epa.state.il.us/communit...)

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