1500 Skokie Asbestos Site
Northbrook, Illinois

Background

After responding to a complaint on March 14, 2001, regarding asbestos removal work at an office building at 1500 Skokie Blvd., Northbrook, Illinois EPA inspected the site. The State of Illinois subsequently sealed the building from public access on March 14, 2001, due to an immediate health threat presented by uncontrolled asbestos contamination throughout the building. Consequently, tenants of the building have been unable to access their offices since that time.

Work has been going on for some time at the building. When will it be safe for tenants to return?

Beginning on April 10, 2001, tenants' belongings were removed from the building and decontaminated. The items are being released to the tenants as they are cleaned. The next phase of work will address the third floor asbestos abatement. It began on April 13, 2001, and is expected to be complete later this week. The third and last phase of the work involves cleaning and decontaminating the entire building and its contents. Illinois EPA is reviewing a work plan for that work now. We cannot say how long it will take to work out the details of that plan and accomplish the cleanup work.

Are the tenants able to retrieve their belongings?

Yes. Tenants are able to retrieve their belongings as they are cleaned per the lists that tenants provided to the building owners.

Should I be worried about asbestos exposures that I may have received while working in the building?

We do not have any data on concentrations of asbestos fibers in the air that may have been present during the recent work or any previous work. If you are concerned about your health, we suggest that you speak to your personal physician about medical monitoring.

You gave information in your last fact sheet about how asbestos can damage one's health. Where else might I look for information about this subject?

There is extensive literature available on the subject. Much of it is available on the Internet. The web sites for the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and U.S. EPA are good resources for information on asbestos and your health.

Most actual health studies, however, relate to occupational settings where workers in the asbestos industry (or a related industry) were exposed to very high levels of asbestos over a long period of time rather than environmental exposures to lower levels over brief time periods.

In fact sheet #1, we gave some links to specific web sites that talk about asbestos and your health. In addition, you may want to consult your personal physician or the Illinois Department of Health, Division of Environmental Health (217) 782-5830, Asbestos Section or Toxicology Section for more information and other resources.

I regularly took work home with me before we were told about the contamination. What should I do to decontaminate the items I took home? Did I inadvertently bring asbestos into my home?
While there are some common-sense cleaning steps you can take to get the bulk of the fibers off contaminated items, there is no simple way to rid your home of fibers you may have inadvertently transported there. You may use a wet cloth to effectively wipe fibers off hard surfaces. To decontaminate papers or files, however, the process becomes more complicated. Where wet wiping is a problem, you may physically remove many of the fibers using a dry rag (discard the rag afterwards), then vacuum the entire area with a HEPA filter vacuum (discard the filter using double plastic bagging).

Carpeting and fabrics may trap asbestos fibers. To have your home or specific items professionally decontaminated, it is best to consult with an environmental contractor licensed to do asbestos removal.

**Should I have a chest x-ray taken to determine my level of exposure?**

Chest x-rays cannot show asbestos fibers, but can find early signs of lung disease. Other tests, such as lung function tests and high resolution CT scans, can also detect changes in the lungs caused by asbestos. These changes usually are not detectable until years after exposure.

Visit the ATSDR website for a good question and answer fact sheet on asbestos

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