

North Ridge Estates Asbestos Cleanup – October 2004

Preliminary Findings from Activity Based Air Sampling

In July 2004, EPA collected air samples while workers mimicked three common outdoor residential activities, including a child playing in the dirt, weed-trimming and rototilling. The sampling was to help determine if there is an unacceptable risk of lung disease from breathing airborne asbestos fibers from debris and soil at North Ridge Estates.

The number of asbestos fibers detected in these samples was low, but it showed that asbestos fibers can be released into the breathing space of people engaging in these activities, especially during child's play. As a result, our recommendation is to proceed immediately to determine the final cleanup measures at North Ridge Estates in order to prevent or minimize ongoing exposure to current and future residents of the community.

EPA will be prepared to discuss these results at the community meeting on October 13, 2004.

Removal work is nearing completion

The EPA emergency action started in the spring of 2003 following negotiation of an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) with MBK. The final work identified in this AOC, the stabilization of burial pits, will be completed in October 2004.

During this emergency action, contractors hired by MBK removed 90 tons of asbestos containing materials (ACM) exposed in residential yards. Crews picked up all visible ACM from the surface in the summer of 2003 and returned in spring 2004 to pick up some additional material that surfaced after the winter freeze-thaw cycle. Exposed steam pipe was removed and the location of the steam pipeline was mapped for future reference.

As part of the removal, EPA collected soil, indoor air and outdoor air samples in order to find out more about the risk posed to residents in North Ridge Estates.

What are the next steps?

EPA believes a final cleanup plan is needed at North Ridge Estates to minimize and prevent long-term effects to human health, especially for young children who live in the neighborhood.

This plan includes a formal Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) for the site that thoroughly evaluates possible cleanup measures. EPA will select a site remedy after considering community input, and will publish it in a Record of Decision. The RI/FS is needed to make sure the correct actions are taken to protect residents. The responsible party, MBK, is prepared to conduct the RI/FS under an enforceable agreement, and EPA is preparing a draft Statement of Work.

Conducting an RI/FS does not mean delaying corrective action. Candidate areas for early cleanup actions will be evaluated while the investigation underway. Institutional controls, such as fencing and signing or deed notices for problem spots may also be placed to keep people safe from exposure to asbestos.

Continuing partnership

EPA provided oversight of the removal conducted by MBK through a legal order. The cleanup would not have been possible without the assistance of many partners.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) continue to contribute people, resources and expertise to the investigation and cleanup of asbestos containing materials at North Ridge Estates.

Property owners and residents have a personal stake in seeing their neighborhood and yards cleaned up. Activities which have aided the asbestos removal include sharing site-specific information where appropriate, cooperating to grant access to cleanup personnel, and contributing to discussions during numerous community meetings. This active participation has made a positive difference in cleanup decisions.

Resources for more information:

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DEQ: www.deq.state.or.us/er/NorthRidge
DHS: <http://www.healthoregon.org/superfund/nrsite.cfm>
ATSDR: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/>