



Scranton School District
Northeast Scranton Intermediate School
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET #2
March 4, 2020

BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2020, a decision was made by the Scranton School District (SSD) Administration to close four schools within the District due to hazards associated with asbestos. This ultimately included the relocation of students from Northeast Scranton Intermediate School (NESIS). At NESIS an additional concern with the plaster (asbestos content) arose.

Additional testing was recommended by the US EPA and subsequently SSD engaged an environmental consultant. Thorough building inspections were performed, and in conjunction with plaster sampling identified that the new wing of NESIS (built in 1931) does not have asbestos concerns. The old wing (constructed in 1906) and the auditorium do have asbestos present. All plasters are below the EPA threshold for regulation under the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) of 1% or greater. There are other asbestos containing materials within the building (insulation, floor tile, etc.) and stabilization of these is presently occurring. Additionally, asbestos materials were identified in plenums and ventilations systems, requiring actions.

THE HAZARD

Asbestos is a known carcinogen. Asbestos fibers can embed themselves in the lungs and cause numerous health conditions, some of which do not manifest for 20 to 30 years. Protective actions surrounding asbestos are designed to minimize the number of fibers that become airborne. Asbestos, when intact, such as in floor tile does not present a significant hazard. The EPA requires actions for damaged friable asbestos materials, as these become airborne and present hazards most easily.

Testing and investigations at NESIS did not identify other toxic materials of concern.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Other schools in the District have been inspected to ensure hazardous conditions do not exist, and this has been confirmed. Since NESIS has been closed, additional samples and remediation actions have occurred. Work to stabilize, repair and abate the most significantly damaged materials is under way. Upon completion of each activity, clearance assessments are conducted by the independent consultant and visual and air samples must pass US EPA standards.

To address the questions regarding personal belongings and school supplies in the building, testing was performed and identified asbestos contained in dusts below levels of concern cited by EPA in other situations. Release of personal items has occurred. Release of additional items from throughout the building is now being planned by the District.

On March 2, the school board approved expenditures up to \$50,000 to bring the 1931 side of the NESIS building into a condition where it could be occupied by students. The environmental consultants are working with various regulatory agencies and the US EPA to develop a path forward for this process. At this time, a re-occupancy date has yet to be determined.

The public will be updated regularly through these FACT SHEETS and answers to questions will be posted. For additional information or to submit questions, visit the "Environmental Task Force" page on the Scranton School District website (www.scrsd.org).