



Scranton School District
Northeast Scranton Intermediate School
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

On January 29, 2020, a decision was made by the Scranton School District 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.

Representatives from the US EPA were on-site on February 5, 2020 and recommended additional testing of plaster to determine asbestos content. SSD engaged an environmental consultant to assist in this testing and work commenced on February 6, 2020.

Samples were collected per EPA protocol (walls and ceilings) and results indicated that the new wing (built in 1931) does not have asbestos in the plasters. The old wing (constructed in 1906) does have asbestos in some rooms, but all 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.

THE HAZARD

Asbestos is a known carcinogen. Asbestos fibers can embed themselves in the lungs and cause numerous health conditions, some which do not manifest for 20 to 30 years. As asbestos was in multiple building materials, the mineral is present in many schools, both in the District and around the country. Asbestos is most dangerous when inhaled, so 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 isolation of damaged friable asbestos materials.

WHAT TO EXPECT

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. This work is expected to be completed by March 2020. Upon completion of each activity, clearance assessments are conducted by the independent consultant and visual and air samples inspection must pass US EPA standards. Other schools in the District have been inspected to ensure hazardous conditions do not exist.

To address the questions regarding personal belongings and school supplies in the building, the consultant has recommended dust samples be collected and analyzed for asbestos fibers. The US EPA has provided this guidance in similar situations.

During the most recent inspection of the building by the consultant, damaged asbestos containing materials were discovered within HVAC systems. This is an obvious issue: the air is distributed throughout the building. To date all air samples collected have been below EPA "clear criteria" however, the potential for a significant fiber release is present. The HVAC systems are being evaluated by the consultant, the abatement contractor, and engineers and recommendations will be provided to the Board concerning the environmental health of the building in March.

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