



U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, REGION 3

ZONOLITE/W.R. GRACE VERMICULITE SITE

CLEANUP UPDATE

ELLWOOD CITY, LAWRENCE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

JUNE 2008

CLEANUP TO BEGIN SOON

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin to remove soils contaminated by asbestos at the former Zonolite/W.R. Grace Facility located at 12th Street and Factory Avenue in Ellwood City.

- Work should begin July 7 and last 12 weeks. Hours of work will be M-F, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., plus a few possible Saturdays.
- Work will take place on the hillside behind the former W.R. Grace/Zonolite Co. plant and the Moose Lodge property.
- Rock-filled baskets, called gabions, will be placed at the bottom of the hillside to stabilize the slope and control erosion.
- All trees and vegetation will be cleared and the soil will be graded.
- A capping system, with a liner and soil cover, will be installed over the hillside.
- During the work, dust and erosion control measures will be used.
- Air monitoring will be conducted on a regular basis during cleanup operations.
- Excavation will only occur where soil is easily accessible, and not located on the hillsides or under structures or paved areas, as these covered areas already act as caps.
- Institutional controls will be put in place to prevent future activity from disturbing the cap.
- Security will be provided after working hours to prevent access to the cleanup areas and prevent trespassers being put at risk.

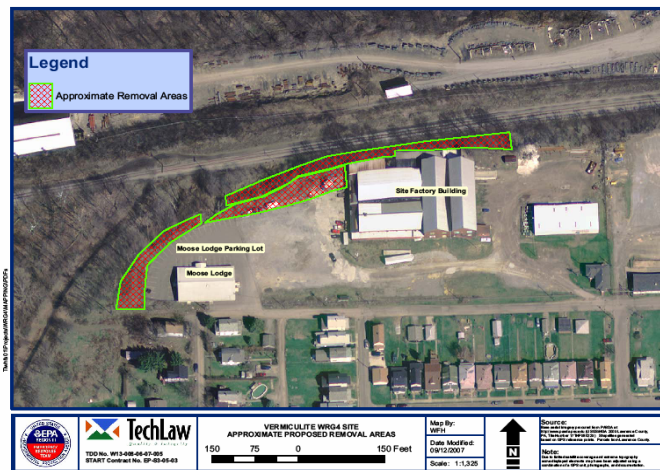
WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

EPA conducted several rounds of sampling between October 2000 and August 2006 to evaluate whether the Ellwood City facility posed potential health risks.

- The evaluation was needed to respond to an EPA initiative investigating facilities that had received vermiculite ore from the W.R. Grace vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana.

- Vermiculite ore from the Libby mine contains asbestos, which EPA recognizes as a hazardous substance.
- Early sampling did not reveal significant levels of asbestos.
- However, in 2006, new information from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (the environmental arm of the CDC) pointed to the need for a more extensive sampling plan.
- Subsequently, 48 samples were collected. Eleven samples contained between 0.25 percent and 1.75 percent tremolite asbestos.
- Tremolite is one of six asbestos minerals and found in the vermiculite ore that came from the Libby mine.

Aerial view of work area



WHAT ABOUT HEALTH RISKS?

Since there is no standard establishing acceptable asbestos levels for soil, EPA consulted with ATSDR throughout the site assessment to determine if the asbestos found during the sampling posed a risk to the surrounding community.

- ATSDR concluded that the levels of asbestos in the soil and *occult* asbestos (asbestos not easily detectable by routine sampling methods) could represent a health risk if it were disturbed.
- Asbestos is cause for concern because chronic inhalation of excessive levels of asbestos fibers can result in lung diseases, such as asbestosis, mesothelioma, and lung cancer.
(over)

HEALTH RISKS (CONTINUED)

- Asbestos fibers in soil can be broken down by foot or vehicle traffic and weather conditions. This type of soil disturbance can cause the asbestos fibers to be released into the air.
- The site is used by trespassers and recreational vehicles which could cause the fibers to be disturbed and released into the air, and inhaled by people on and off site.

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

EPA provides services to communities to ensure all voices are heard.

- One of these services is known as **Technical Services for Communities or TASC**. This program provides unbiased educational and technical assistance to communities affected by hazardous waste sites.
- The program, developed by the EPA, provides experts from private companies and universities free of charge to explain hazardous waste problems and their possible solutions.

- The EPA offers this assistance so your community may better understand your site's technical issues and participate in the decision-making process more effectively.
- For more information about TASC, contact Amelia Libertz at 1-800-553-2509 x45522.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

VISIT EPA'S WEBSITE:

www.epaosc.org/WRG4vermiculite

OR CONTACT EPA REGION 3:

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