



POWHATAN MINING COMPANY SITE EPA TO BEGIN CLEANUP

GWYNN OAK, BALTIMORE COUNTY, MARYLAND

AUGUST 2010

EPA CLEANUP APPROVED

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin the cleanup of asbestos contamination found at the former Powhatan Mining Company facility, located in the Gwynn Oak area of Baltimore County, MD.

EPA has conducted a series of air, soil, debris, and indoor dust sampling. Air samples were collected during different seasons and weather conditions to see how these factors might affect the sampling results and potential for exposure to asbestos. Air samples were also collected using both ambient air sampling stations and Activity-Based Sampling (ABS) methods.

- Ambient air samples were collected over a two-day period using 12 air sampling stations that were positioned at three different distances from the Site
- Activity-Based Sampling (ABS) involves outdoor air samples collected while disturbing the soil using routine activities for that area (such as walking, mowing, raking, and gardening).

This series of sampling showed no elevated levels of asbestos in the ambient air and ABS results were only slightly elevated; *however* it did detect some elevated levels of asbestos in the soil located around the old mining facility and in some nearby residential backyards. Most of the contamination was found in the dust and air inside the old building.



Example of naturally occurring asbestos ore found on the site

Due to these findings, EPA will begin cleaning up the inside of the former facility first, in order to address the main source of the contamination. Once the building has been cleaned, it will be deconstructed and the building debris removed for proper disposal off site.

BACKYARD CLEANUPS

During EPA's investigation of the site, historical data and photos of the area were obtained. Historic aerial photos show that material from the plant could have washed down-gradient directly behind the site. Some of those down-gradient locations are now used as residential backyards.

Backyard cleanups will be based on a specific soil value. When soil results are detected below that level, ABS samples will likely determine the need for cleanup, as follows:

AIR: Although sampling results showed low levels of asbestos fibers, the soil being disturbed during the ABS air sampling method was considered very moist. Moisture can help fibers adhere to the soil and not allow them to become easily airborne. Because of the low amount found in air even with moist soil conditions, EPA concluded that the air results show a potential for asbestos-related health risks.

SOIL: Sampling results found asbestos percentage values ranging from non-detect to 11.0 percent. Although there is no current established level for asbestos in soil that would dictate the need for a cleanup action, EPA has decided to offer cleanup for yards where soil values exceed 1.0 percent asbestos. (1.0 percent has been a frequently used screening value in the past).

Yards with sampling results ranging between non-detect and 1.0 percent may need additional ABS air sampling to help determine if cleanup is warranted. *The ABS results will be evaluated by a toxicologist or public health official to aid in determining the need for soil cleanup.*

WHAT YOU MAY NOTICE

EPA set up an office trailer on the former Powhatan Mining Company property. Over the next few weeks, you will notice more EPA personnel and contractors working at the site.

Workers, especially those who will be working inside the former mining building, may be wearing various protective gear such as: plastic coveralls, booties, gloves, breathing masks, hard hats or safety goggles.

Protective gear is often worn by environmental sampling and cleanup workers as part of their job requirements. It will not be necessary for nearby residents to wear similar equipment.

SITE BACKGROUND

The asbestos processing facility processed regional (and later out-of-state) asbestos ore from the 1920s until the late 1970s.

In 1984, the Powhatan Mining Company declared bankruptcy. The site is approximately one acre in size and is located off of Windsor Mill Road, within a residential area of northern Baltimore County.



Exterior of Powhatan Mining Co. Building

NEXT STEPS

- EPA will continue to work closely with MDE during this investigation.
- EPA will continue to work closely with the federal Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) during this investigation.
- For more health-related information, please visit the ATSDR website at: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>.

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Now that approval and funding has been granted for the cleanup, EPA is preparing a Health and Safety Plan to ensure the safety of the cleanup workers and the health of the community.

Once finalized, the Health and Safety Plan will be available for public review on the Internet at:

www.epaosc.org/powhatan.

EPA will begin preparing cleanup plans, which will involve:

- cleaning and removing items from inside the old mining facility for proper disposal or salvage;
- cleaning up the interior of the building;
- deconstructing the building;
- reducing the risk of future contamination migrating from the site by either covering or excavating soil under and around the building;
- conducting additional sampling to confirm the removal of asbestos was successful;
- constructing a *smaller* replacement building to store any uncontaminated items that were salvaged from the building prior to demolition;
- and excavating and backfilling residential soils.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit EPA's website at:
www.epaosc.net/powhatan

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