

# **SWIFT CREEK AND SUMAS RIVER FLOODING FACT SHEET FOR RESIDENTS**

## **STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR FAMILY'S EXPOSURE TO AIRBORNE ASBESTOS**



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

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The Sumas Mountain landslide, near the headwaters of Swift Creek, releases up to 120,000 cubic yards of sediment into Swift Creek each year. The landslide material contains natural deposits of asbestos. Swift Creek joins the Sumas River near the town of Nooksack. The Sumas River continues north past the town of Sumas and into Canada.

### **Assume that floodwaters and mud from Swift Creek and the Sumas River contain asbestos**

- ◆ Individual asbestos fibers are too small to see.

#### **Before flooding —**

- ◆ Use sandbags to reduce the possibility of flood water from reaching the living area of your property or your house.
- ◆ Do not fill sandbags with materials from the river.

#### **After flooding —**

##### **Handling flood deposits**

- ◆ Wet down flood deposits before you dig into or move them. Dried river mud is more likely to release asbestos fibers into the air than wet mud.

- ☂ Use a hose to flush the material off of your driveway or walkway into an area where people will not contact it.
- ☂ Do not use fans to dry out the soil or sediments.
- ☂ Do not sweep the material when it is dry. This can stir up the asbestos fibers.

- ◆ When working with the flood deposits, wear a disposable work suit (available in most hardware stores) or coveralls that can be taken off and kept outside.
- ◆ Use respiratory protection (see below) when you spend time in areas which have been flooded or where material containing asbestos may be disturbed.
- ◆ Rinse mud off your shoes after walking in areas with flood deposits.
- ◆ Remove your shoes prior to entering your home so that you do not track in small fibers.
- ◆ Double bag any contaminated materials, such as work suits or gloves, before disposing of them.

*Continued Next Page*

# PROTECT YOUR LUNGS

## Do not rely on a dust mask or surgical mask.

These will not remove asbestos from the air you breathe.

Whenever you move or disturb material deposited by Swift Creek and Sumas River flooding, we recommend that you **use a respirator and filter cartridges specifically designed to filter asbestos from the air you breathe.**

*Look for a NIOSH/MSHA certified half-face respirator equipped with a pair of HEPA filter cartridges (color coded purple) with N-100, P-100, or R-100 NIOSH rating.*



To be effective, your respirator must be properly selected, fitted, and used. The respirator must fit your head and face snugly (beards, long mustaches, and stubble allow unfiltered air to leak into the respirator and should be shaved before respirator use). Finally, use the respirator all the time you are working in an area where you know or suspect asbestos is present.

Reusable half-face respirators and HEPA filter cartridges can be purchased from a reputable safety equipment store and from some hardware stores. For example, Sanderson's Safety Supply has suitable respirators from \$12 to \$25 and HEPA filters around \$10.

- ◆ Look for NIOSH certification and N-100, P-100, or R-100 on the filter label.
- ◆ Ask the sales person for a fit test to ensure that the respirator will keep out unfiltered air.

- ◆ Ask the sales person to demonstrate how to check for a good face seal before each use.
- ◆ Follow the use, cleaning, and care instructions provided with the respirator.
- ◆ Learn more at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp\\_part/default.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/topics/respirators/disp_part/default.html)

**We do not recommend disposable respirators** but certain disposable NIOSH-certified respirators provide an airtight seal to your face and, with adequate filters, may reduce your asbestos exposure. When a reusable respirator as recommended above is unavailable, disposable 3M Brand 9210 or 8211 with HEPA filters rated at N-95, P-95, or R-95 (or higher) are available at most hardware stores. They should be used only one time and then disposed.

The following links will explain how to use respirators properly:

- [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos/homeowner/ppe.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/asbestos/homeowner/ppe.html)
- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzpz5fko-fg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tzpz5fko-fg)
- [www.nycosh.org/environment\\_wtc/GulfCoast/Katrina\\_respirator\\_FS.pdf](http://www.nycosh.org/environment_wtc/GulfCoast/Katrina_respirator_FS.pdf)

**NOTE:** For employees doing asbestos work, disposable respirators are not approved. At a minimum, NIOSH certified HEPA respirator must be worn and, when asbestos is above the levels allowed for short-term exposures, workers must wear full respiratory protection. For workplace questions, contact Washington State Labor & Industries (L&I): David Johnson (360) 902-5514 or [joda235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:joda235@lni.wa.gov)

# CLEANING YOUR HOME

## If you suspect you have tracked dirt or mud from a flooded area into your home

- ◆ Consider having a certified asbestos abatement (removal) contractor clean your home. They will use a special HEPA vacuum to clean up contaminated material.
- ◆ Use a wet cloth for dusting rather than a dry cloth or feather duster.
- ◆ Wash or vacuum your carpets and curtains using a vacuum with a high efficiency HEPA filter.

## Stop flood deposits from entering your home

- ◆ Pave or cover walkways, driveways, or roadways affected by or made of material from Swift Creek or Sumas River. The cover should be thick enough to prevent asbestos-contaminated soil from being disturbed during everyday activities.
- ◆ Cover Swift Creek or Sumas River deposits in gardens and yards with asbestos-free soil or landscape covering. The cover should be thick enough to prevent asbestos-contaminated soil from being disturbed during everyday use.
- ◆ Pre-wet your garden or agricultural areas before digging, shoveling, or disturbing the soil.
- ◆ Try to keep pets from carrying dust or dirt into the home on their fur or paws by keeping them out of areas where asbestos may be present.

- ◆ When pets do get dirty, bathe them. Remember, brushing the dirt off will release asbestos fibers into the air.
- ◆ Remove shoes before entering homes or other buildings to avoid tracking-in dirt.
- ◆ Use doormats to lower the amount of dirt tracked inside.
- ◆ Keep windows and doors closed on windy days and when construction or roadwork is being done nearby.
- ◆ Consider wearing coveralls or other work clothes while gardening, and wash up outside.

## Cleaning techniques for reducing exposure to asbestos

- ◆ Use a wet rag instead of a dry rag or duster.
- ◆ Use a wet mop on non-carpeted floors.
- ◆ Use washable area rugs on floors and wash them regularly.
- ◆ Vacuum carpets often using a vacuum with a high efficiency HEPA filter.
- ◆ Install a HEPA quality filter in forced air furnace systems.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have additional questions about these recommendations please contact Julie Wroble at (206) 553-1079

✉ [wroble.julie@epa.gov](mailto:wroble.julie@epa.gov)

or Dave Blake at the Northwest Clean Air Agency at (360) 428-1617 ext. 212

✉ [dave@nwcleanair.org](mailto:dave@nwcleanair.org)

## ***USEFUL LINKS***

Whatcom County Health Department Website

[www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/environmental/solidwaste/asbestos\\_swift\\_creek.jsp](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health/environmental/solidwaste/asbestos_swift_creek.jsp)

EPA Sumas Mountain Information

[www.epa.gov/region10/asbestos/sumasmountain.html](http://www.epa.gov/region10/asbestos/sumasmountain.html)

Health Information

[www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/1health.pdf](http://www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/1health.pdf)

Ways to Control Naturally Occurring Asbestos Dust

[www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/3control.pdf](http://www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/3control.pdf)

Naturally-Occurring Asbestos around Your Home

[www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/4home.pdf](http://www.arb.ca.gov/toxics/asbestos/4home.pdf)