



United States  
Environmental Protection  
Agency

Region 5  
Office of Public Affairs  
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Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Illinois, Indiana  
Michigan, Minnesota  
Ohio, Wisconsin

## This Fact Sheet Will Tell You About:

- The deadline established to request a property inspection.
- The background of the site.
- Cleanup activities currently underway.
- What the future cleanup activities will involve.
- How to get more information.

## Minnesota Department of Health Interviews

Interviewers from MDH are once again going door-to-door in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the former Western Mineral Products plant. These interviews are part of the Northeast Minneapolis Community Vermiculite Investigation, a study designed to measure residents' contact with the vermiculite waste and related health effects.

If you lived in the area bordered by 27<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, Central Avenue, Broadway Street and University Avenue or, if you know you came into contact with the waste from the plant, you are invited to call Tannie Eshenaur of MDH at (651) 215-0916 or e-mail her at [tannie.eshenaur@health.state.mn.us](mailto:tannie.eshenaur@health.state.mn.us).

# EPA Sets June 1 Deadline for Property Inspection Requests

**Western Mineral Products Site  
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**May 2002**



*Asbestos abatement workers at a northeast Minneapolis residential property.*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has set June 1, 2002, as the final date for Minneapolis-St. Paul residents to request an inspection of their property for outdoor asbestos-containing vermiculite material. Interested residents who have not yet participated must request a visual inspection of their property before June 1. The inspections, and any required cleanups, will be completed at no cost to the homeowner or tenant.

The third and final year of EPA's cleanup of residential properties, primarily in Minneapolis' Logan Park neighborhood, will begin later this spring, as weather conditions permit.

The cleanup effort is the result of investigations into the manufacture of home insulating products at the former Western Mineral Products plant. The plant closed in the late 1980s. By-products of the manufacturing process were frequently made available to area residents over several decades and used as fill for gardens, pot holes and alleys.

A total of 99 residences were cleaned during 2000 and 2001, with 48 additional cleanups already scheduled for 2002. EPA currently has a waiting list of about 100 residents who have requested inspections of their property for outdoor asbestos-containing vermiculite material.

## Site Activities Update

Last fall, EPA returned to the neighborhood to continue site cleanup activities. As of November 2001, EPA completed cleanup activities at 99 residential properties. There are 813 properties in the database. Of those, 713 have already been inspected.

No inspection will be performed until the owner or resident of the property requests it. You can help in this effort. Talk to your neighbors about the importance of having their property inspected and let them know they can make an inspection request by calling EPA's hotline at (612) 706-0615 by June 1, 2002.

## Site Background

The Western Mineral Products site is composed of industrial property in northeast Minneapolis at 1720 Madison St. and 1815 Jefferson St. in Hennepin County, Minn., and surrounding residential properties. The industrial site is bordered on the north by Electramatic, Inc., on the east by Burlington Northern & Santa Fe railroad tracks, on the west by Jefferson Street, and on the south by a commercial complex.

Western Mineral Products, Inc. was purchased by W.R. Grace Co. in 1963 to manufacture vermiculite insulation from vermiculite ore that was mined in Libby, Mont. The Minneapolis facility operated from the late 1930s to the late 1980s. During operations, piles of waste vermiculite rock were placed outside the facility. This rock was offered to anyone, free of charge. Residents in Logan Park and other neighborhoods may have used this material for driveway or yard fill, in pet enclosures, gardens, barbeque pits, children's sand boxes, or carried it in the trunks of their cars for traction in the snow. Unfortunately, the vermiculite ore from Libby was found to contain high levels of tremolite asbestos. The waste material, "crushed rock" or "stoner rock," also contains high levels of asbestos.

In February 2000, EPA conducted a site assessment of the former Western Mineral Products site. The interior and exterior portions of the building were inspected. Samples taken from outside the building contained asbestos.

In April 2000, EPA representatives conducted additional sampling of surface soils near the facility that appeared to have visual evidence of vermiculite or asbestos. At that time, there was a recently excavated trench along the

western edge of the facility where a new electrical transformer was to be installed. EPA observed an unusual layer of what appeared to be vermiculite two feet below the surface in the trench. Samples collected on the facility property contained asbestos. At about this time, the first public meeting about asbestos and vermiculite was hosted by the City of Minneapolis.

In June and August 2000, EPA collected residential samples. The EPA team began a walkthrough of the residential area within a ¼-mile radius of the site. The team attempted to contact residents of homes where suspect asbestos-containing material was visible. Residents were asked about the possibility of the transfer of material from the Western Mineral Products facility to their premises.

In September 2000, EPA representatives were available to talk with residents about vermiculite processed at Western Mineral Products, Inc. Informational pamphlets were delivered to approximately 400 residents. Phone numbers were provided to residents who wanted to schedule an appointment with EPA for a visual inspection of their property. EPA conducted approximately 100 environmental assessment interviews in the Logan Park neighborhood. Findings of asbestos contamination in public areas, such as alleyways and streets, increased public concern.

In October 2000, EPA established a field office in the Logan Park neighborhood near the industrial site. The office served as a command post for the cleanup activities. Through facts sheets, an October 11, 2000, public meeting, and two informal open houses, residents were urged to contact EPA if asbestos contamination was suspected. A local EPA hotline, (612) 706-0615, was established at the site. A total of 313 residences were inspected in the fall of 2000. Of the 313 residences inspected, 244 required no further action, 23 were targeted for further soil sampling, 25 were targeted for cleanup in the spring of 2001, and 21 residential properties were cleaned up in the fall of 2000. The cleanup involved vacuuming alleys behind the asbestos-contaminated residential properties with a high-powered vacuum system and excavating soil from residential properties with visible asbestos. During these activities, the work area and neighborhood air was monitored. Of the 21 residences cleaned up, 16 alleys/residential properties were vacuumed. Soil on all 21 residential properties was excavated and restored.

## Asbestos Exposure

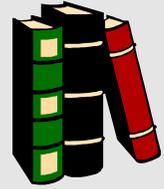
People who work in industries that use asbestos or asbestos-containing products, such as construction material, may breathe fibers into their lungs. In addition, people who live or work near asbestos-related operations may inhale asbestos fibers that enter the air through releases of materials into the air. Some asbestos fibers are so small they invisibly float in the air. People may also swallow asbestos if they eat in areas where there are asbestos fibers in the air. People who have the waste vermiculite material from the Western Mineral Products site, or other vermiculite-processing facilities, on their property may be exposed to asbestos. The amount of asbestos a person is exposed to will vary according to the number of fibers that are in the air and how long a person breathes the air containing the fibers.

Some people exposed to asbestos have health problems; some do not. After asbestos fibers are inhaled, they can easily enter body tissues. The fibers may become trapped in airways and lung tissue. Diseases related to asbestos may not show up until years later. Today, health problems are showing up in people who worked with asbestos during World War II. If you believe you have asbestos-containing material on your property grounds, you should contact an EPA representative through the toll-free number listed on the back page.

## For More Information

### Information Repository

Western Mineral Products site technical documents and information about the Superfund process are available for review in the local information repository listed below:



Minneapolis Public Library Northeast  
2200 Central Avenue Northeast  
Minneapolis, MN 55418

### Web Sites

EPA Web Site:  
<http://www.epa.gov>  
EPA Headquarters  
Asbestos Page:  
<http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/>



### Contact Names

The names, addresses, and phone numbers of EPA officials working on the Western Mineral Products site are listed on the back page of this fact sheet.

## Mailing List

If you did not receive this fact sheet by mail, you are not on EPA's mailing list for the Western Mineral Products site. To add your name to the mailing list to receive future information concerning the site, please fill out this form, detach, and mail to:

Mr. Stuart Hill  
Community Involvement Coordinator  
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)  
EPA Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

## Contact Information

For additional information about site activities or about asbestos and vermiculite, you may contact the following:

### Stuart Hill

Community Involvement Coordinator  
Office of Public Affairs (P-19J)  
(312) 886-0689  
hill.stuart@epa.gov

### To schedule a property inspection:

(612) 706-0615

***Remember to call by June 1, 2002!***

### Sonia Vega

On-Scene Coordinator  
Office of Superfund (SE-5J)  
(312) 886-7191  
vega.sonia@epa.gov

EPA Region 5  
77 W. Jackson Blvd.  
Chicago, IL 60604-3590  
(800) 621-8431 (EPA toll-free hotline)



Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
ATSDR Information Line (Atlanta, Georgia): (888) 42-ATSDR (888) 422-8737

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