



U.S. EPA Public Notice

January, 2010

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is planning to conduct assessment activities in connection with the former WR Grace Zonolite facility. The Government Accountability Office, "the investigative arm of the United States Congress", has asked EPA to reassess a number of facilities which received asbestos contaminated vermiculite ore from Libby, Montana. A mine near Libby, Montana was the source of over 70 percent of all vermiculite sold in the U.S. from 1919 to 1990. There was also a deposit of amphibole asbestos at that mine, so the vermiculite from Libby was contaminated with asbestos. Vermiculite from Libby was distributed for processing to a number of facilities across the country.

Vermiculite is a naturally-occurring mineral composed of shiny flakes, resembling mica. When heated to a high temperature, flakes of vermiculite expand as much as 8-30 times their original size. The expanded vermiculite is a light-weight, fire-resistant, and odorless material and has been used in numerous products. Asbestos is a mineral fiber that has been used commonly in a variety of building construction materials for insulation and as a fire-retardant. Because of its fiber strength and heat resistant properties, asbestos has been used for a wide range of manufactured goods. Asbestos causes cancer and other diseases. There is no known safe level of amphibole asbestos exposure. Asbestos fibers must be airborne to cause a health risk through inhalation.

EPA will be conducting assessments at some of these facilities and may assess some nearby properties. Assessments may range from visual inspections to the collection and analysis of soil samples. These assessments will assist EPA in determining the impact of the former vermiculite processing facilities on the public. EPA will be requesting additional information and/or property access from homeowners in the vicinity of the facility. EPA will begin contacting potentially affected residents the week of January 25, 2010

For further information, contact Althea Foster, EPA On-Scene Coordinator, at 214-665-2268; Jon Rinehart EPA On-Scene Coordinator, at 214-665-2229; Phyllis June Hoey, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator at 214-665-8522; or, Bill Little, EPA Community Involvement Coordinator at 214-665-8231 . The toll free number is 1-800-533-3508.

To receive a Spanish translation of this fact sheet call U.S. EPA at 1-800-533-3508. Para recibir una traducción en español de esta hoja de datos, comunicarse con la Agencia de Protección del Medio Ambiente de los EEUU (la EPA) al número de teléfono 1-800-533-3508.