



# U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## Powhatan Mining Company Site

### -- EPA to Conduct Air and Soil Sampling --



Gwynn Oak, Baltimore County, MD

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3

August 18, 2009

### Collecting Samples

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in cooperation with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), will collect air and soil samples at the former Powhatan Mining Company facility, located in the Gwynn Oak neighborhood of Woodlawn, Maryland. Due to past asbestos processing, EPA will test samples for elevated levels of asbestos contamination. The testing will help find out:

- If asbestos levels exist above the regional, naturally-occurring background levels,
- If elevated levels of asbestos have migrated off the old facility property, and if so,
- Where and how far it has moved, and most importantly,
- If there is a potential threat to human health and the environment.

Soil sampling will begin this week. Samples will be collected from various locations, both on and near the site. **EPA may ask some adjacent residential property owners if soil samples may be collected from their yards.**

- ✓ Residential participation is voluntary.
- ✓ Residential samples will not be collected without the owner's permission.
- ✓ Sampling costs will be the responsibility of EPA, not the residents.
- ✓ Property owners will receive a copy of their sampling results.

During soil sampling work, EPA will also be collecting onsite air samples.

### What You May Notice

Workers may be wearing various protective gear such as:

- plastic coveralls, booties and gloves
- breathing masks
- hard hats, or
- safety goggles

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



Southeast view of the former Powhatan Mining Company plant, located in Gwynn Oak, MD



Southwest view of the building, showing the former processing area.

### **Next Steps**

- Approximately 20 soil and air samples will be collected in the next few weeks.
- The sampling schedule will depend on weather conditions and permitted access to residential yards.
- The samples will be sent to a laboratory for analysis. EPA expects initial results back in 3 to 5 weeks, and confirmed results back in an additional few weeks.
- Follow-up sampling may be needed.
- EPA will continue to work closely with MDE during this investigation.

EPA considers individual private property information confidential, however the overall sampling results will be shared with the community.

The results will provide a better picture of the extent and level of asbestos contamination that may exist and will help determine the appropriate cleanup methods to be used for the site.

### **What is Asbestos?**

Asbestos is a naturally-occurring mineral that has long and flexible heat-resistant fibers that can be spun or woven. Because of these

characteristics, asbestos has been used for a wide range of manufactured goods, such as building materials, friction products like auto parts, and packaging.

We are all exposed to low levels of asbestos in the air we breathe. However, breathing air contaminated with elevated levels of asbestos, especially over a long period of time, can cause serious lung problems and cancer.

EPA will work together 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>.

### **Brief 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.
- ❖ In April 2009, MDE requested EPA to conduct a site investigation and cleanup.
- ❖ Through the course of several site visits and the review of previous testing data, EPA determined that the on-site asbestos could pose a potential threat to human health and will begin actions to address the site.

### **For More Information**

Visit EPA's website at: [www.epaosc.net/powhatan](http://www.epaosc.net/powhatan)

Or contact:

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