



Asbestos-containing Vermiculite

A resource for OSSTF Kawartha Pine Ridge
Teachers and Occasional Teachers

January 16, 2012

This resource from your OSSTF KPR Teacher and Occasional Teacher Bargaining Units is a guide for dealing with health concerns about vermiculite insulation in some KPRDSB schools. The resource describes why vermiculite is a health risk in these schools and what can be done if you believe your health could be affected. *Your* OSSTF District 14 TBU and OTBU are hosting an information session, which will be run jointly with local ETFO Representatives, on **Tuesday, January 17th, 5:00 p.m at South Monaghan Public School (Bailieboro)**. Please RSVP to dist14@nexicom.net by January 11. Please join us.

Vermiculite insulation is a health concern in nine KPRDSB schools

Vermiculite insulation has been leaking from the walls in nine KPRDSB schools. In addition, vermiculite insulation was also used in two KPRDSB schools that are now closed. The vermiculite is known to contain asbestos. Asbestos is a health hazard. The affected schools are listed here.

Which schools are we talking about?

The following schools are known to have asbestos-containing vermiculite in masonry walls or between masonry and brick walls:

- Bowmanville High School (confirmed Jan 13/12)
- Hillcrest PS
- Keith Wightman PS
- Kirby PS
- North Cavan PS
- North Hope PS
- Westmount PS
- Norwood District Secondary School
- Orono PS (confirmed Dec 7/11)
- Lakeshore Facilities Centre (formerly Newtonville PS)
- Community Training and Development Centre (Cobourg) – CTDC

The school board has also identified two schools that are now decommissioned:

- Kendall PS
- Lockhart PS

Vermiculite is a mica-like mineral that was valued as an insulation product because it was cheap, fire resistant and easy to work with. The vermiculite insulation that was used in identified KPR schools was mined in Libby, Montana. Libby vermiculite is known to contain small amounts of asbestos. Because this vermiculite insulation is a loose fill product, the asbestos fibres can easily become airborne. Inhaling asbestos fibres can lead to asbestos-related disease.



Vermiculite is seen as tiny, shiny flakes

The length of time that the vermiculite insulation has been leaking into these schools is unknown. OSSTF members with work experience in these schools may have been exposed to airborne asbestos fibres that were released from the spilled vermiculite. Although the risk of asbestos exposure from spilled vermiculite appears to be small, it remains a health concern.

Ontario has rules about asbestos

In Ontario, there is a regulation just for asbestos (Ontario Regulation 278/05). This regulation comes under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. School boards must follow the rules in Ontario's asbestos regulation. School boards must have an updated asbestos management plan in use at each of its school sites. The asbestos management plan for each school site must state where the asbestos is; what condition it is in; and what is being done to protect people from asbestos exposure.

What to do if you are concerned

If you have a work history that includes one or more of the schools listed above, then you may have been exposed to asbestos-containing vermiculite. OSSTF recommends that you take two actions. Consult your doctor about potential health risks. Complete and submit a WSIB Worker Exposure Incident Form.

Why the WSIB Worker Exposure Incident Form is important

Ontario's Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) has a voluntary program for employees and employers to report unexpected exposure to a dangerous substance. This WSIB program is called PEIR, the Program for Exposure Incident Reporting. The purpose of this voluntary program is to gather information about the exposure, while it is readily available, in case the worker becomes ill in the future. The information about the exposure is stored safely in the PEIR database at WSIB. Taking part in the PEIR program also gives the worker access to expert advice from WSIB on workplace safety and prevention. When you complete and submit the Worker Exposure Incident Form you become part of the PEIR program.

| Are you concerned about asbestos exposure? |
|--|
| Talk to your doctor OSSTF is advising members who have worked in these schools to talk with their doctor about the potential for workplace exposure to asbestos; and to request that this concern be noted in their medical record. A sample letter for your doctor will be available shortly. |
| Complete and submit a WSIB Worker Exposure Incident Form Completion of the WSIB Exposure Incident Form is voluntary. A recent KPRDSB memo to staff about asbestos-containing vermiculite refers to the voluntary WSIB Worker Exposure Incident Form. The form is available from WSIB, OSSTF or the school board. The WSIB Worker Exposure Incident Form is completed and submitted directly to WSIB by the OSSTF member. If you decide to complete and submit this form, OSSTF can help you with the task. |

What happened at Keith Wightman Public School?

Last June, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) asked Ministry of Labour (MOL) to investigate concerns about the removal of asbestos pipe insulation at the school. While preparing for the MOL investigation, ETFO found an asbestos assessment report that showed vermiculite insulation had been leaking from the masonry walls into two classrooms. The report indicated that the vermiculite contained asbestos. The vermiculite leakage had occurred where the ceiling trusses had pierced the masonry wall. The vermiculite had spilled onto the upside of ceiling tiles and then sifted into the workspace. The school board had cleaned it up. Staff had not been informed about the vermiculite leakage or the clean-up.

Further investigation showed that vermiculite leakage was occurring in other areas of the school. Vermiculite insulation was found leaking from places where machinery, pipes, bolts and ceiling trusses had pierced the masonry walls. It was also discovered that wall damage had caused vermiculite release. The two classrooms where vermiculite had first been found remained problem areas.

The Ministry of Labour inspector wrote orders that required the school board to fix the vermiculite leakage at Keith Wightman PS and reassess the asbestos management plan at this site.

ETFO has appealed the MOL order to the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB). ETFO wants the MOL to write new orders that require the school board to fix the vermiculite leakage and to reassess the asbestos management plans at all affected school sites. In January, the OLRB will meet with ETFO, the MOL and the school board to address this ETFO appeal.

Norwood District High School

The Employer provided a memo to the principal at Norwood District High School on November 4, 2011 that advised administration to share information with staff about cleanup of vermiculite found and seal holes to keep any vermiculite from spilling in the future. This work is to occur over the Christmas holidays.



Vermiculite insulation has leaked from the masonry walls.

What happens next?

The school board has now identified nine schools with vermiculite problems. Two former KPR schools have also been identified as sites that were insulated with asbestos-containing vermiculite.

Even though the school board has worked to stop vermiculite leakage by mending cracks and filling holes, vermiculite debris continues to be found in the nine affected schools.

KPRDSB has developed a six-month plan for dealing with vermiculite leakage at these schools. The six month plan focuses on monthly inspection of work areas, and clean-up of vermiculite debris that is found there.

OSSTF is here to help

If you have concerns about this issue or any other general Health and Safety issue, please report those concerns to your principal. Speak to your Branch President and/or your Health and Safety Representative, or members of our Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC), or the District Office.

Janie Kelly – District & TBU President janiekelly@nexicom.net

Nancy Edwards – OTBU Co-President n.edwards@sympatico.ca

Barry Craft – JHSC Representative OSSTF barry_craft@kprdsb.ca

Don Urquhart – JHSC Representative OSSTF donald_urquhart@kprdsb.ca

Daniel McLean – District Officer / H&S Committee Liaison danielmclean@nexicom.net



This old advertisement shows a worker pouring Zonolite brand vermiculite insulation

References

Vermiculite Insulation Containing Amphibole Asbestos, It's Your Health, Health Canada, 2009

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vsv/prod/insulation-isolant-eng.pdf

Special Report: Policy - A review of human carcinogens—Part C: metals, arsenic, dusts, and fibres, International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), Lancet Oncology, May 2006.

<http://www.asbestosdiseaseawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/IARC-Special-Report-200911.pdf>

Asbestos, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

<http://www.ohcow.on.ca/resources/handbooks/asbestos/Asbestos.pdf>

Elimination of Asbestos-related disease, World Health Organization, 2006

http://whqlibdoc.who.int/hq/2006/WHO_SDE_OEH_06.03_eng.pdf

WSIB Worker's Exposure Incident Form

<http://www.wsib.on.ca/files/Content/Downloadable%20FileWorkerExposureIncidentForm/3958a.pdf>

WSIB PEIR Brochure

<http://www.wsib.on.ca/files/Content/Downloadable%20FilePEIR%20Brochure/PEIRa.pdf>