




air pollution control district
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

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Board Agenda Item

TO: Air Pollution Control District Board

FROM: Aeron Arlin Genet, Air Pollution Control Officer 

CONTACT: Bryan Wong, Air Quality Specialist, Compliance Division, (805) 961-8812

SUBJECT: District Asbestos Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file a presentation on the District's Asbestos Program.

BACKGROUND:

The District's Asbestos program protects the public from hazardous asbestos fibers through implementation and enforcement of the Federal National Emissions Standards for Asbestos (Asbestos NESHAP). The program covers renovations and demolition projects in Santa Barbara County.

DISCUSSION:

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is a group of naturally occurring fibrous minerals. These minerals are lightweight, fire-resistant, and not easily destroyed by natural processes. These characteristics, along with properties like sound absorption and flexible strength, made asbestos a widespread construction and insulation material until the 1970s. Even today, asbestos is not completely banned by the EPA, and can still be found in some construction materials.

Health Hazards

Intact asbestos fibers imbedded within construction materials and components do not pose a health hazard. However, once the fibers are broken or crushed, through physical contact or building renovation and demolition activities, the fibers can become airborne. The California Air

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Resources Board has identified asbestos as a toxic air contaminant, an air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious illness.

Airborne asbestos fibers are a significant health threat because they are invisible to the naked eye. Exposure to asbestos allows the fibers to reach deep within the lungs, irritating and scarring lung tissues. The more asbestos one is exposed to, the more likely they are to get an asbestos disease. Symptoms of asbestos-related diseases generally do not appear for 20 years or longer after the first exposure. Asbestos has been shown to cause cancer, mesothelioma, and asbestosis, a chronic lung disease similar to emphysema. These diseases are difficult to treat, and most are impossible to cure. Since there is no known safe level of exposure, all asbestos exposure should be avoided.

Asbestos NESHAP Regulation

The federal Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop and enforce regulations to protect the general public from exposure to airborne contaminants that are known to be hazardous to human health. In accordance, the EPA established the National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAP), and asbestos was one of the first hazardous air pollutants regulated, in the 1970s.

The goal of the Asbestos NESHAP is to minimize the release of asbestos-containing material during demolition and renovation activities. Accordingly, the Asbestos NESHAP specifies work practices to be followed during demolitions and renovations of all structures, installations, and buildings (with some exceptions). Elements of the program include survey and notification requirements prior to beginning a project, as well as work practice standards and disposal requirements during renovation and demolition.

District Role

Our District is delegated by the EPA to implement the Asbestos NESHAP in Santa Barbara County. In California, several Air Districts have adopted rules intended to be more stringent than the Asbestos NESHAP or to clarify aspects of the regulation. Our District's Asbestos program does not have additional requirements beyond the Asbestos NESHAP.

The District implements the Asbestos NESHAP by reviewing asbestos surveys and notifications, inspecting demolition and asbestos removal projects, investigating complaints, and taking enforcement action when violations occur. In order to carry out these duties safely and effectively the District's asbestos inspectors maintain certifications and use personal protective equipment including respirators, coveralls, gloves and footwear. Inspectors also screen, take, and process samples of suspect asbestos-containing materials. In addition, our District works closely with other Air Districts to ensure the Asbestos NESHAP is being implemented consistently and objectively, coordinates with municipal building departments in Santa Barbara County to identify projects subject to the Asbestos NESHAP prior to their permit issuance, and reports asbestos data to the EPA. Lastly, the District works to increase public awareness on asbestos hazards, understand how asbestos is regulated, and know how to limit their exposure to asbestos to protect their health.

More details of these program elements will be shared as part of the accompanying Board presentation. More information is also available on the District's website:
www.ourair.org/asbestos.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding for this program comes, in part, from the federal grant from the EPA, and from asbestos notification fees specified in District Rule 210, approved by your Board. The revenues and the costs for the asbestos program described above are included in the budget approved by your Board. There are no additional fiscal impacts.