

New Trier Winnetka Campus Facilities Project
Asbestos: Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is asbestos, and where does it come from?

A. Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral mined from the ground.

Q. Where can asbestos be found?

A. Asbestos can be found in many older construction materials and vehicle products, including thermal systems insulation, spray-on fireproofing, caulks, sealants, ceiling and floor tiles, roofing material, and brake linings, just to name a few. It was regularly used because of its strength and its ability to resist heat and corrosion, but its use has been severely restricted in the last several decades after certain health risks were discovered.

Q. What health risks are associated with asbestos, and how does asbestos become a hazard?

A. Asbestos becomes hazardous only when fibers are released into the air. For this reason, asbestos-containing material such as pipe insulation, spray-on fireproofing, or anything friable (meaning it can be crushed into a powder by hand) is more of a risk than items like floor tiles, caulks, or sealants. Asbestos does not pose a risk simply through its presence in older building materials, but care must be taken when those materials might be disturbed, such as through construction. The health risks associated with asbestos include chronic lung disease and lung or other cancers.

Q. What asbestos-containing building materials (ACBMs) can be found at New Trier?

A. Asbestos is found in some of New Trier's older systems: pipe insulation, floor tiles, plaster, glazing, and sealants. However, not all these items at New Trier contain asbestos.

Q. How is asbestos identified?

A. New Trier has an Asbestos Management Plan (on file in the Facilities Office) that identifies all ACBMs on District property.

Q. Are schools required to remove ACBMs in their buildings?

A. No, as long as the District has a Management Plan in place and regularly inspects the ACBMs for damage. The presence of ACBMs alone does not pose a safety risk, as long as those materials are well-maintained and regularly inspected.

Q. What triggers the District to abate asbestos?

A. If an area is being renovated and ACBMs will likely be disturbed, the District will have it abated. If asbestos becomes damaged beyond repair, the District also will have it abated.

Q. How does the District ensure its students, staff, and neighbors are protected from airborne asbestos fibers during an abatement project?

A. All asbestos work done at New Trier follows strict safety mandates from the Illinois Department of Public Health and involves extensive planning, review, and independent monitoring from trained environmental professionals. The District must notify the Illinois Department of Public Health and Cook County authorities at least 10 days prior to the start of any asbestos work. This notification must include a project design created by an IDPH licensed Professional Designer that identifies the location, amount, and type of asbestos being removed; the project dates and times; the name of the contractor; and other specifics. The District must also contract with an independent Environmental Consultant. This Consultant is responsible for air monitoring of the project area and all adjoining areas outside the

project area. These air samples are taken continually beginning before any abatement work (background samples), during the project, and after the project is complete (clearance samples).

Abatement is done outside of school hours and does not take place in occupied areas. All work areas are protected by locked full-height plywood barriers. These barriers are clearly marked with signage warning people not to enter. Inside the actual work area, all ventilation equipment is taken out of service, and multiple layers of polyurethane sheeting are applied to walls, floors and ceilings. The area is then put into a negative pressure via negative air machines to assure that even in the event of a leak, no materials could escape outside of the work area. These negative air machines run 24/7 starting before abatement and lasting until final air clearance is given.

After the asbestos is removed, every square inch of surface inside the containment area is washed. The area then sits for 12 hours and is washed again. This cleaning process happens three times. After the third time, a leaf blower is brought into the containment to stir the air, and a final air sample is taken and read. Only after this extensive cleaning procedure is complete and the air sample verified does the contractor remove the barriers and return the space back to the District.

Q. Why doesn't New Trier just remove all asbestos from its buildings?

A. Asbestos in a well-maintained condition does not pose a health risk. Asbestos is very expensive to remove due to the stringent regulations that must be followed. Removing asbestos just for the sake of removing it would also require re-insulation of pipes that are still in service, a costly and disruptive project. Most schools with ACBMs choose to abate asbestos when they have construction work planned that might disturb the materials.

Q. Who can remove asbestos from a school?

A. Only Illinois Department of Public Health licensed asbestos workers are allowed to maintain or remove asbestos.

Q. Does New Trier employ any licensed asbestos workers?

A. Yes, each campus has an IDPH Competent Person; this person is responsible for all abatement activities and maintaining the management plan. The District also has 4 IDPH licensed asbestos workers on the maintenance staff in case of an emergency.

Q. What if I have other questions about asbestos or environmental safety?

A. You may contact Winnetka Campus Facilities Manager Steve Linke at (847) 784-2074 or linkes@newtrier.k12.il.us