

Where can I find the health consultation?

The public health consultation for the Tampa site is available on the Internet at the following address:
<http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/SUPERFUND/PHA.htm>
The document also may be reviewed in person at the following location:

Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library
1505 Nebraska Avenue, Tampa, FL
Phone - 813-272-5747

Public input and questions are encouraged. ATSDR responses will be provided in a separate document available to the public and not as an additional release of this site-specific health consultation. Comments on the health consultation must be submitted in writing. Mail comments to:

Chief, Program Evaluation
Records and Information Services Branch
ATSDR
1600 Clifton Rd., NE (MS E-60)
Atlanta, GA 30333



ATSDR
AGENCY FOR TOXIC SUBSTANCES
AND DISEASE REGISTRY

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and is based in Atlanta, Georgia. ATSDR's mission is to serve the public using the best science, taking responsive public health actions, and providing trusted health information that will prevent harmful exposures and disease related to toxic substances.

Former Zonolite and W.R. Grace & Company Exfoliation Facility

March 2005

ATSDR Fact Sheet



Former Zonolite and W.R. Grace & Company Exfoliation Facility

Tampa, Florida

Contents/Overview

This fact sheet tells you:

- About a vermiculite processing plant in your area that may have exposed people to asbestos in the past (before 1991)
- What asbestos exposure is and its possible health effects
- The conclusion and recommendations of a health evaluation done on the site
- How the public can help provide further information
- Where you can get more information

Site Background

Site owners have processed vermiculite at 3401 North 3rd Avenue in Tampa, Florida, since the 1950s. The site remains an active vermiculite processing plant today. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and the Florida Department of Health (DOH) are evaluating the plant because from the 1950s to 1991, the former owners, Zonolite and W.R. Grace & Company processed vermiculite mined in Libby, Montana. The vermiculite from Libby contained asbestos. ATSDR has linked exposure to the asbestos in Libby vermiculite with adverse health effects.

Vermiculite exfoliation uses heat to pop or expand the vermiculite ore. Expanded vermiculite is used to manufacture insulation, building products, agricultural products, and fireproofing material. This exfoliation process released asbestos fibers from the Libby vermiculite ore into the air, where they could be inhaled. It also produced waste material, the unpopped part of the ore, often known as "stoner rock." Before 1991, the Tampa site processed at least 48,991.8 tons of vermiculite from a mine in Libby.

The Libby mine shut down in 1990. The plant now processes vermiculite from Virginia, South Carolina and South Africa. In contrast, several studies of vermiculite mined elsewhere (South Carolina, Virginia, and South Africa) reported that levels of amphibole asbestos were either not detectable or were present at much lower levels than those found in the Libby vermiculite.

The facility operates in a generally commercial and light industrial area. Approximately four houses lie within one-tenth of a mile of the site. Beyond these, the closest residences are about one-quarter mile away. The U.S. Census reports that 4645 people lived within one mile of the site in 1990.

Recent EPA soil sampling showed less than 1% (<1%) Libby asbestos in on-site soil. A fence around the site limits human exposure to contaminated soil. In August 2002, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) collected indoor-air and high-volume, outdoor-air samples at this site. Data from these samples do not indicate a risk to current workers for exposure to airborne asbestos.

About Asbestos

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral. It is made up of fibers that may be so small that you cannot see them. Breathing in asbestos fibers is called asbestos exposure.

When asbestos fibers are breathed into your lungs, they may remain there for a lifetime. In some cases, these fibers may cause illness and even death from lung disease many years later.

Conclusions & Recommendations

Former Workers

Conclusion: People who worked at the facility when it processed Libby vermiculite were exposed to hazardous levels of asbestos. Those who lived with former exposed workers were also potentially exposed to asbestos fibers carried home on workers' hair and clothing, although the degree of exposure cannot be determined.

ATSDR and Florida DOH plan to do the following actions:

1. Encourage former workers and their household contacts (people who lived with them) to consult with a physician with expertise in asbestos-related lung disease.
2. Contact former workers and request information about waste disposal and operating practices at the facility to confirm that wastes were not disposed of onsite in the past.

Current Workers

Conclusion: The results from the indoor-air and high-volume, outdoor-air samples that NIOSH collected at this site in 2002 do not indicate a risk to current workers for exposure to airborne asbestos. Therefore, exposures for current workers and their household contacts are not a public health hazard.

ATSDR and Florida DOH plan to take the following action:

Review new information that becomes available to determine appropriate actions to protect public health.

Past Community

Conclusion: Not enough data are available to determine whether people who lived near the plant were exposed to hazardous levels of Libby asbestos. In addition, not enough data are available to determine if stoner rock, an asbestos-contaminated waste material from vermiculite processing, was given to the community in the past.

ATSDR and Florida DOH plan to take the following actions:

1. Contact former workers for information about past waste disposal and operating practices at the facility to confirm that wastes (for instance, stoner rock) were not made available to the community.
2. Review new information that becomes available to determine appropriate actions to protect public health.

Present Community

Conclusion: Currently not enough data are available to determine whether individuals are being exposed to Libby asbestos from waste that may have been used for a variety of purposes, such as fill, driveway surfacing, or soil amendments.

ATSDR and Florida DOH plan to take the following action:

Review new information that becomes available to determine appropriate actions to protect public health.

Consumer Products

ATSDR did not evaluate products that contain Libby vermiculite, such as vermiculite attic insulation, as part of this project. Information concerning vermiculite attic insulation is available on ATSDR's Web site at www.atsdr.cdc.gov/NEWS/vermiculite051603.html and on EPA's Web site at www.epa.gov/asbestos/insulation.html.

How can the public help?

The public can help ATSDR and the Florida Department of Health by:

- Calling the number below and providing information about this vermiculite processing site, including the disposal and distribution of waste rock.
- Sharing this fact sheet with former workers, their household contacts and past community members who lived near the plant. Ask them to call the numbers below for more information.

Where can I find more information?

For more information, please call the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Community Environmental Health at (877) 798-2772 and ask to speak with Connie Garrett or Lu Grimm. Or people can go to the web site: <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/environment/community/SUPERFUND/index.html>

People may also contact ATSDR toll-free at 888-422-8737 and ask to speak with Health Communications Specialists Maria Teran-Maclver or Debra Joseph. Callers should refer to the former Zonollite and W.R. Grace site in Tampa, Florida.