

## Former W.R. Grace/Zonolite Company Site, Beltsville, Maryland

### Site Background

The former W.R. Grace/Zonolite Company site at 12340 Conway Road in Beltsville, Maryland, operated from 1966 until the early 1990s. The plant processed vermiculite mined in Libby, Montana. This vermiculite was contaminated with asbestos.

The facility exfoliated (“popped” or expanded) vermiculite to manufacture insulation, building products, agricultural products, and fireproofing material (brand name: Monokote). Records from 1966 through 1988 indicate that over 93,000 tons of vermiculite were processed at this site.

Since 1998, Atlantic Transportation Equipment, Ltd. (ATEL) has leased the property. They operate a truck maintenance and repair shop out of the former vermiculite processing building. Land use immediately surrounding the site is primarily industrial. The closest residential area is approximately one-half mile away from the site. According to US Census data, 320 people lived within one mile of the site in 1990.

Recent EPA soil tests detected no residual Libby asbestos in on-site soils, and most of the site is covered with structures or gravel. A low level of residual Libby asbestos was detected at one location inside the facility, but no asbestos fibers were found in the air sample collected inside the former processing building.

### Conclusions & Recommendations

#### Former Workers

- **Conclusion:** People who worked at the W.R. Grace/Zonolite facility were exposed to hazardous levels of asbestos. People who lived with former workers were probably also

exposed to hazardous levels from fibers carried home on workers’ hair and clothing.

- **Recommendation:** Identify former workers and their household contacts (people who lived with them) to evaluate potential health effects.

#### Current Workers

- **Conclusion:** Currently, the site poses no apparent public health hazard from asbestos. Although trace levels of Libby asbestos were detected in an isolated area inside the facility, that area is not accessible to workers. Future disturbances or renovation of the area, however, could result in hazardous exposures.
- **Recommendation:** Eliminate the possibility of exposure to the contaminated area inside the facility.

#### Past Community

- **Conclusion:** Although ATSDR continues to review information, currently not enough data are available to determine whether people who lived near the plant were exposed to hazardous levels of Libby asbestos.
- **Recommendation:** Review new information that becomes available to determine appropriate actions to protect public health.

#### Present Community

- **Conclusion:** Community exposure to Libby asbestos from plant emissions or from onsite asbestos-contaminated materials poses no public health hazard. 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.

- **Recommendation:** 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](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/NEWS/vermiculite051603.html) and on EPA's Web site at [www.epa.gov/asbestos/insulation.html](http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/insulation.html)

## Where can I find more information?

The public health consultation for the Beltsville site is available on the Internet at the following address:

[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/naer/beltsvillemd](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/naer/beltsvillemd)

The document also may be reviewed in person at the following location:

Beltsville Branch Public Library  
4319 Sellman Road  
Beltsville, MD 20705-2543  
Telephone: (301) 937-0294

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 by October 31, 2003. Mail comments to:

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

The names of those who submit comments will not be printed in a public document. They are, however, subject to release through requests made under the U.S. Freedom of Information Act.

For more information, please call ATSDR toll-free at 888-422-8737 and ask to speak with Environmental Health Scientist Amanda Gonzalez or Health Communications Specialists Maria Teran-Maclver or Debra Joseph. Callers should refer to the former W.R. Grace Beltsville site.

*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. ATSDR was created by the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA, also called the Superfund law). This law established ATSDR as the federal health agency to deal with environmental health issues at hazardous waste sites. The agency's mission is to prevent exposure and adverse health effects from a variety of hazardous substance sources.*