

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Asbestos Release Site

Where is the Asbestos Release Site and how did it get there?

The Asbestos Release Site (ARS) refers to a 112-acre area located north and south of County Line Road where subsurface soil contains asbestos fibers. The ARS is clearly marked by signs and fencing. From the early 1890s to 1970s, the Ehret Magnesia Company and its successor, the Keene Corporation, manufactured asbestos insulation products at a plant located on private land surrounded by what was the state park at that time. The asbestos itself was imported. A waste slurry that contained asbestos was generated during the manufacturing process. Ehret and Keene disposed of this waste in abandoned quarries and drainages located along County Line Road and Station Lane.

What is Asbestos?

Asbestos is naturally occurring fibrous minerals that are relatively strong, can be woven, and are resistant to heat. Because of these properties, asbestos fibers have been used in a wide range of manufactured goods, including roofing shingles, ceiling and floor tiles, paper and cement products, textiles, coatings and automobile parts.

Exposure to airborne asbestos may result in a potential health risk because persons breathe in asbestos fibers. Continued exposure can increase the amount of fibers that remain in the lung. Fibers embedded in lung tissue over time may cause serious lung diseases including asbestosis, lung cancer, or mesothelioma.

What is happening at the ARS now?

A remediation contractor was selected by NPS in September 2012. Work completed in fall 2012/winter 2013 included site surveying, archeological clearance, soil sampling for disposal characterization, and work plan preparations. The remediation contractor will begin site preparation activities, such as mobilizing equipment and clearing excavation areas in March 2013; actual excavation of soil is scheduled to begin in April 2013. The remediation and restoration of impacted areas is anticipated to be completed by summer 2014. The site will be completely re-opened for public use at that time.

Why are the people working in the ARS wearing white suits and respirators?

Under certain circumstances, workers within the ARS are required under Federal health and safety regulations to wear specific safety equipment. This safety equipment is worn by workers who will be in the ARS for extended periods of time completing activities that may disturb the soil. Because continued exposure to asbestos can increase the amount of fibers that remain in the lung, workers within the ARS involved in these activities must wear equipment that protects their health.

To ensure that soil-disturbing activities do not impact park visitors, workers will use techniques to minimize the potential for any asbestos located in the disturbed soil to become airborne. Workers will also wear air monitoring filters which will be analyzed to determine if these techniques are working. Air monitoring around the perimeter of the work area will also be completed during the entire time that any soil disturbing activities are conducted. If there is any indication that asbestos is being released into the air, all work will be suspended and additional dust suppressing techniques will be implemented.

Why do I have to stay out of the ARS?

The ARS is clearly marked by signs and fencing and the public is prohibited from entering these areas. Exposure to airborne asbestos may result in a potential health risk because persons may breathe in asbestos fibers. The soil that contains asbestos is covered with non-asbestos containing soil, and as long as the soil cover remains in place, the asbestos cannot become airborne. Disturbance of the soil cover from vehicular or foot traffic could result in a release of asbestos into the air.

During construction, additional areas may be closed to the public to protect visitors from open excavations and from moving vehicles. For your safety, please observe all signs and obey instructions from personnel on site.

How can I find out more?

The attached Community Fact Sheet contains more details on the ARS. In addition, the park maintains a repository of information related to the ARS that may be viewed by the public upon request. This repository includes copies of environmental investigations and other related documents.

Information about the Site also is available on the VFNHP website:

<http://www.nps.gov/vafo/parkmgmt/asbestos.htm> .

If you have any questions concerning the Asbestos Release Site, please contact Donna Davies, the NPS project manager at (610) 793-1006 or donna_davies@nps.gov.