



## **Boulder Valley School District**

**File: EBD**

**Adopted: March 23, 1989**

**Revised:**

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### **ASBESTOS IN THE SCHOOLS**

The Board of Education finds that the presence of asbestos in the school buildings of the Boulder Valley School District poses a risk to human health and the environment, requiring the implementation of a carefully planned and thorough program to safeguard school children and personnel. This includes assessment of the extent of the hazard, application of precautions designed to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibers, and the systematic abatement of all asbestos-containing materials.

Inspection of the school buildings, as required by federal law, has revealed that asbestos-containing building materials are present in some form in nearly every school in the District. These materials include acoustical ceiling plasters, spray-on fireproofing, thermal system insulation, acoustical ceiling tiles and panels, vinyl asbestos tile flooring, drywall and plaster, and various other building constituents. Many of these materials are in areas of public access, including classrooms, offices, and hallways.

The large majority of asbestos-containing building materials was installed in connection with new construction, additions, and remodeling conducted by the School District during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. At that time, the District was totally unaware that the use of such materials could pose a health risk. In many cases, it was unaware that the materials contained asbestos at all.

Since the enactment of the Asbestos School Hazard Detection and Control Act in 1980, the District has become increasingly knowledgeable about the hazards of asbestos and the extent of its presence in the schools. With the completion of the Management Plans in 1989, as mandated by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), the administration is fully advised as to the location and condition of all asbestos-containing materials in the District. It is appropriate, therefore, at this time, to undertake a thorough assessment of the problem and prepare a comprehensive response.

**1. Health Hazard.** The United States Congress has made the following findings, which the School District adopts:

- a. Exposure to asbestos fibers has been identified over a long period of time and by reputable medical and scientific evidence as significantly increasing the incidence of cancer and other severe or fatal diseases, such as asbestosis;
- b. Medical evidence has suggested that children may be particularly vulnerable to environmentally induced cancers;

c. Medical science has not established any minimum level of exposure to asbestos fibers which is considered to be safe to individuals exposed to the fibers; and

d. The presence in school buildings of friable or easily damaged asbestos creates an unwarranted hazard to the health of the school children and school employees who are exposed to such materials.

20 U.S.C. § 3601.

Therefore, the prevention of exposure to airborne asbestos fibers at any level is a matter of the most compelling concern to the School District and the entire school community. In all activities affecting asbestos-containing materials, human health considerations shall be addressed as the first priority.

**2. Abatement.** In accordance with federal law, the School District instituted a thorough inspection of its buildings for the presence of friable asbestos-containing materials in 1981, with particular emphasis on spray-on acoustical ceiling and fireproofing materials and thermal system insulation. Since that time, all those materials have been encapsulated, enclosed, or removed. This has significantly reduced the risk of exposure and, under ordinary conditions, there should be no asbestos hazard to occupants of the buildings.

Experience, however, has demonstrated that encapsulation is not an adequate, permanent remedy. The material is subject to continual damage from disturbances by causes such as water leakage, air flow, vibration, deterioration, building movement, and contact due to student conduct or ordinary custodial and maintenance activity. These disturbances can result in significant fiber release episodes.

In addition, the materials must be regularly inspected, maintained, and repaired, at significant expense and diversion of maintenance resources.

**3. Removal.** The Board of Education concludes that removal is the only permanent solution to the problems of friable asbestos-containing materials, in public areas, including encapsulated materials. Although removal is very expensive, that cost will ultimately be incurred in the event of building renovation, demolition, or sale, and may be increased due to the expense of maintaining the material over time. In any case, public health concerns require this conclusion.

Scheduling removal of asbestos-containing materials involves considerations of public health, budgetary issues, program needs, and planning. The School District shall develop and implement an integrated plan incorporating all of these concerns within an overall policy of progressive removal of all friable asbestos-containing materials from at least the public areas of the schools. This plan should be coordinated with and guided by the recommendations and response actions set out in the District's Management Plans.

**4. Safety Precautions.** Removal of the friable asbestos-containing materials will require a period of years due to both financial and scheduling constraints. During this period, it is extremely important that all necessary or appropriate steps be maintained to ensure the safety of all building occupants. Many of these precautions are mandated by the AHERA regulations and are incorporated in the Management Plans.

All encapsulated friable asbestos-containing material must be regularly inspected and maintained to prevent deterioration. When disturbances occur, they must be promptly reported and repaired to minimize the risk of an exposure incident. Nonfriable asbestos-containing materials also must be inspected and maintained in accordance with applicable procedures.

All custodial or maintenance jobs which may affect asbestos-containing materials shall be conducted only by qualified personnel with appropriate equipment. No such job should be performed without a prior determination by a qualified person as to the presence and risk of disruption of asbestos-containing materials. Teaching and custodial staff should be adequately trained to identify asbestos-containing materials in their work areas in order to prevent accidental fiber releases due to lack of knowledge.

All construction, additions to, or renovations of school buildings should be planned with prior consideration of the presence of asbestos-containing materials in the work area. In planning any such project, the removal of asbestos-containing material should specifically be considered for inclusion.

The District recognizes that many persons who have been employed prior to 1983 as well as school children may have been exposed to asbestos fibers in the school buildings. Due to the long latency period of asbestos-related disease, medical screening is not necessarily meaningful. A determination should be made of the efficacy of medical screening to detect the presence of disease and the classes of employees who would benefit from physical examinations for that purpose. This will provide the basis for deciding on the need or appropriateness of a District-sponsored medical screening for asbestos-related disease.

LEGAL REFS.: Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, 15 U.S.C. 2641 *et seq.*  
Asbestos School Hazard Detection and Control Act, 20 U.S.C. 3601 *et seq.*

CROSS REF.: EBE, Respiratory Protection Program

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