

Something's In The Air: *Asbestos shrouds the state*

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Throughout California and in every town you'll see similar scenes: children playing soccer at recess; toddlers crawling in sandboxes; and kids riding bikes, playing hopscotch, and jumping rope. What you don't see are the naturally occurring asbestos fibers in the dirt, floating in the air, and clinging to your children's clothes. What you may not know is that this asbestos can also cause cancer.

State and federal officials consider all types of asbestos to be hazardous and there is no agreed-upon "safe" level of asbestos exposure. Recently, in El Dorado County, California, a federal asbestos team conducted field tests and discovered that 90% of one community was laced with this deadly dust. Similar tests and community fears eventually pushed the town to embark on a \$2.5 million project to cover all exposed surfaces at the local high school. Larger cities are not immune to this increasing problem; in cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco, the cancer risk is even higher.

Naturally occurring asbestos comes from California's state rock - serpentine. The serpentine rock is typically grayish-green to bluish-black in color, may have a shiny appearance, and is often referred to as "California Jade". Asbestos fibers are released from serpentine rock when it is crushed and, with even the slightest breeze, can make their way into the air we breathe. The state rock is found in 42 of California's 58 counties as well as in Vermont, New York, New Jersey, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Corsica and South Africa. Natural asbestos, commonly occurs in association with altered ultramafic rocks, including serpentine, especially near faults.

The most common type of asbestos found in California is chrysotile, a serpentine mineral; other types include tremolite asbestos and actinolite asbestos which are amphibole minerals.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, and the State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control have recently conducted studies on asbestos exposure. They found that wind and water

Resources Bd., the California Court of Appeals upheld the authority of the California Air Resources Board (Board) to reduce the risk of asbestos emissions in road paving to zero. The Board, through the implementation of the Tanner Act, determined that paving roads with even small amounts of asbestos rock can pose a hazard to human health, and that there is no safe level of exposure of human beings to airborne asbestos fibers. The Tanner Act provides for the identification and regulation of toxic air contaminants by airborne toxic control measures.

Control measures can reduce asbestos from being released into the air. Individuals can reduce exposure first by identifying the location of serpentine rock on or near the property, then by minimizing dust generation in and around the home. Some control measures include: paving over or sealing unpaved walkways, roads, and driveways that contain serpentine rock; covering all finely crushed serpentine rock with clean topsoil; pre-wetting serpentine rock in gardens prior to working the soil; using a damp rag (not a feather duster) when dusting; removing shoes at the door to reduce track-in; using washable area rugs on floors; keeping windows and doors closed

on windy days and during construction that is happening nearby; washing vehicles that have been in direct contact with dust from crushed serpentine rock; and planting vegetation to reclaim disturbed serpentine rock areas.

Property I.D. is the only land use disclosure firm that has been including the naturally occurring asbestos zone disclosure in its reports for over five years at no additional charge.



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can carry asbestos fibers, and certain human activities are capable of kicking up massive amounts of dust containing these fibers. These activities include mining, grading, quarrying operations, construction, driving over unpaved roads, or driving on roads paved in part with asbestos-bearing rock.

In a January 12, 2005 decision, *Coalition for Reasonable Regulation of Naturally Occurring Substances v. California Air*

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